

G. D. Birla

IN THE SHADOW OF THE MAHATMA

A Personal Memoir

With a Foreword

by

The President

Dr. Rajendra Prasad

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IN THE SHADOW OF THE MAHATMA

HERE for the first time, are the rich and revealing details of one of the great friendships of modern times. Ghanshyamdas Birla was like a son to Gandhiji, and their intimate association lasted for thirty-two years, ending only with the Mahatma's tragic death at Birla House in Delhi in 1948.

Mr. G. D. Birla has reproduced a large number of letters written to him by Gandhiji, Mahadev Desai and a number of other prominent officials. Gandhiji's letters deal with such varied subjects as health, diet, Ashram affairs, Harijans, Khaddar, and momentous political affairs including his interviews with Viceroy and other prominent officials. Mr. Birla's own letters are no less revealing. Gandhiji received shrewd and accurate reports of what important people in England and elsewhere thought about the political scene in India. By breaking through suspicion and applying what he constantly refers to as the 'personal touch', G. D. Birla was able to win the confidence of a host of men prominent in the public life of England and India—men like Lord Lothian, Sir Samuel Hoare (now Lord Templewood), Lord Halifax,

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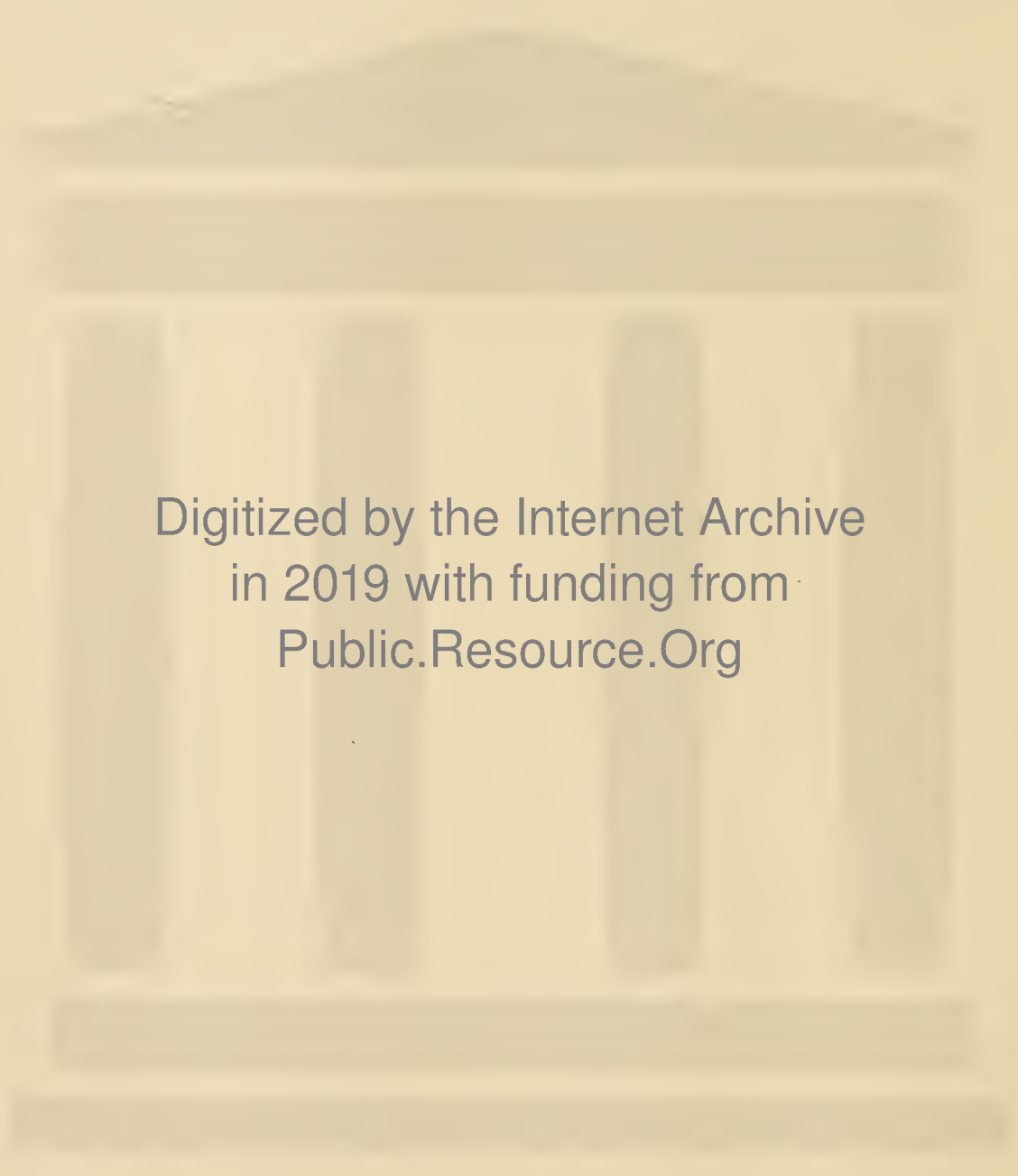
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OF THE MAHATMA

A Personal Memoir

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G. D. BIRLA

With a Foreword by the President

DR. RAJENDRA PRASAD



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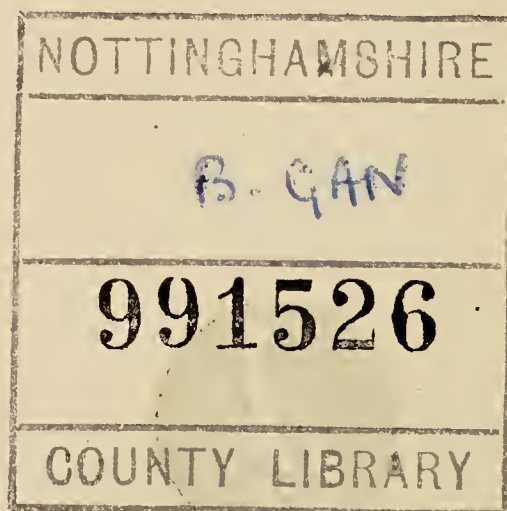
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FOREWORD

By the President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad

When I was approached to write a foreword to this book, I readily accepted the invitation. Apart from my long and intimate association with Shri Ghanshyamdas Birla as a friend who always stood by us during the days of our struggle for freedom and helped us, whenever required, with contribution, I found on reading the book in proof that it was going to be a valuable addition to the literature on an important subject.

The period of fight for freedom constitutes an important epoch in the history of India as it was the time which saw the non-violent struggle of India led by Mahatma Gandhi against the British rule and its successful termination. What happened in the country in those eventful years is well known and newspaper files contain ample description of the events that took place. Little, however, is known of what was passing behind the scenes, both in Mahatma Gandhi's camp and the Government's. This volume to an extent fills this gap. It contains correspondence that passed between Ghanshyamdasji and Mahatmajji and also other political leaders of the country over a quarter of a century. It also contains reports of interviews and substance of conversations which Ghanshyamdasji had with Britishers holding high positions in the Government of the day and in public life. The Round Table Conference and subsequent negotiations between the Government and the Congress leaders and the various events just preceding the inauguration of independence in India are all matters of absorbing interest not only to Indians but also to others who want to know the history of those times. This book, therefore, will serve as a valuable document for all those who are interested in the history of the time and I wel-

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come Shri Ghanshyamdas's decision to publish a part of the material which he has in his possession.

Mahatma Gandhi was a regular correspondent and used to reply to writers of letters personally or through his Secretary Shri Mahadev Desai or through the pages of the Weeklies and in this way through his correspondence he was able to reach and influence the life and character of numberless individuals in this country and abroad. He had also a peculiar gift of recognising the good points in a man and utilising them to the fullest extent that he could for the benefit of the country. It was thus that in his lifetime he literally created a large number of persons who, although they did not see eye to eye with Mahatmaji in respect of many of his programmes, yet rendered invaluable service in their own spheres under his inspiration. Ghanshyamdasji was one of such persons. He did not always agree, but like a soldier obeyed the command of the master. These pages will show how, even though he did not always see eye to eye with Bapu, particularly in matters relating to his economic programme, yet without any reservation helped every cause sponsored by him. He also proved himself to be a trusted exponent of Gandhiji's viewpoint to many Britishers as far as Gandhiji's political programme was concerned. One can see from the book how he undertook visit after visit to England on his own and utilised the opportunity for keeping those in places of authority there well informed about the way Gandhiji's mind was working. He never claimed to act as an appointed agent on behalf of Gandhiji and yet having studied and understood his philosophy and his programme, he took upon himself the responsibility to convey its implications to those that counted. And it may be said that he succeeded in no small measure in this self-appointed rôle.

It is not only in regard to the political movements of Gandhiji that we get a clear glimpse into the working of

his mind as is rightly understood by Shri Ghanshyamdas but in regard to other matters too. Ghanshyamdasji was one of those few who became like a child of Gandhiji and in whom the seed of his teachings found a well-prepared field and his message a ready response. This influence grew as the intimacy between the two grew, which lasted for nearly 32 years. And it was my privilege and joy to watch and observe this relation over a number of years. Because if he was intimate with Gandhiji, he was not less intimate with me.

It has been one of Gandhiji's teachings that those who are blessed with wealth should regard themselves as Trustees and treat their wealth as trust property for the benefit of others. The large number of institutions which are to be seen in so many parts of the country either in the shape of educational institutions or religious temples and Dharamshalas or Hospitals with their apex at Pilani and Delhi are testimony to the fact that Birlas have imbibed this part of Gandhiji's teachings in no small measure. They have earned abundantly and likewise spent also generously and abundantly on every good cause. Apart from the institutions which have been established and are run by themselves there are plenty of others which have been recipients of donations from them. It can be said with truth that there is hardly a good cause on whose behalf an appeal made to them has not evoked a ready response. This applies equally to the independence struggle to which they contributed through Bapu and other political leaders, liberally and without any reservation. These pages will amply show how Gandhiji could draw upon their generosity for any good cause and scheme which he had in hand. Gandhiji in fact never hesitated to draw on their resources when it was necessary to do so, nor did they ever hesitate to put their resources at his disposal.

These pages will show further how Gandhiji in the midst of his multifarious engagements found time to think

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of small details and take personal interest in all the affairs of Birlas as a father does in respect of his children. He even went to the length of prescribing treatments for ailments to a person like Ghanshyamdasji who had no lack of medical aid but because he felt confident that his advice would be listened to with respect and given effect to.

I am, therefore, glad that this volume is being published. I am sure it will be useful and helpful not only to every student of Gandhiji's life and philosophy but also to the historians interested in the events which ultimately led to the establishment of independence in India.

Rashtrapati Bhawan,
New Delhi.
2nd November, 1953.

RAJENDRA PRASAD

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INTRODUCTION

To choose a title for this book was the most puzzling task I have had to encounter. 'My Correspondence with Gandhiji' was a proposal which I did not like. True, this is substantially a compilation of my correspondence with Gandhiji and his Secretary Mahadev Desai who, under the direction of the Master, wrote to me at length when Gandhiji was too busy to write himself and kept me well informed of the events in his camp. But mere correspondence would not tell the whole story. I therefore deliberately decided to include also in this book the records of the various interviews that I have had from time to time with the British Viceroy, British statesmen and others. To have excluded them would have left a blank patch in the picture. I have also included in the book a few other letters from different political leaders which I thought would be relevant to the subject. After the inclusion of all this material, a title confined to narrow boundaries would have been a misnomer. I therefore decided to choose the title *In the Shadow of the Mahatma : A Personal Memoir*, for in all my actions I felt he was close beside me, and I was his shadow.

From the day on which Gandhiji landed in India from South Africa towards the close of the year 1915 to the day on which he died by the bullet of the assassin, he kept India, so to say, in a churn. Almost every day history was created; new ideas, new ambitions, new visions were unfolded before the eyes of the nation by its father. As the churning continued, cream began to float on the surface; and so also the impurities. Gandhiji has gone, but the momentum of the churning that he left is still continuing. Whether we shall produce fresh, pure butter through this churning, or whether it will be adulterated with impurities, or whether we shall be left with merely the impurities without the butter, is more than I can

endeavour to predict. Much will depend on the people themselves.

I could easily have woven a story round the correspondence and the records and given the reader a kind of complete chronological picture. But this is a task essentially for the historian. I should be content to present the material in its crudest form as I have it with me. The material contained in it will bring to light many events not so far known, which went to forge new links for the ultimate chain—the political history of India. When the historian sits down to paint the picture of this period, he will find material in these pages to fill in his canvass with many different hues.

There are obvious gaps in the chronology. I meticulously preserved all the letters that I received from Gandhiji or which were written under his influence by Mahadev Desai (I have treated all the letters from Mahadev Desai and his other Secretaries as if they were letters from Gandhiji, since they were written under his direction), but unfortunately, I did not preserve all those that I wrote to him. Of course, when I was staying with Gandhiji, there was no correspondence but, regrettably, I did not preserve the records of my talks with him. I am not including in these pages all the letters that he wrote to me, for they would make a huge volume beyond the reach of the ordinary man. Hence the choice is deliberately restricted to those which I feel are the most important or revealing. Wherever the gap is small it is perhaps because I was with him at the time. But where the gap is as big as it is some time in 1931 and again between 1942 and 1944, it was because Gandhiji was then in jail and there could be no correspondence with him. Besides this, many records I received from Mahadevbhai and to which he refers in his letters cannot, unfortunately, now be traced. But although to this extent the story is incomplete, the flow is not appreciably broken. The historian will not find it difficult to link the events

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because, though there may be breaks, the sequence of the letters is apparent.

My first meeting with Gandhiji was in 1916 when he came to Calcutta shortly after he landed from South Africa. Our contact continued to the end of his life—a period of 32 years—when he died in my house in Delhi. How did I come in touch with him? The hidden hand of destiny, which works in an inscrutable manner, should alone be credited with this fortunate occurrence in my life. I had no political background and was therefore hardly worthy to be noticed by a world figure. I was born in 1894 in a village with a population of barely three thousand. There being no modern means of communication with the rest of the world either by rail, *pucca* road or post office, our village was virtually isolated from the hubbub of political ferment. The outlet for travelling was by camel, horse or bullock-chariot. A bullock-chariot was a luxury maintained specially by the well-to-do and mainly for the ladies and the infirm. The horse was a rare creature mostly used by the landed gentry. My family had two very good camels and we later acquired a bullock-chariot. But the camel remained for ever the most useful and popular means of conveyance. People these days do not look upon the prospect of a long journey by camel with any enthusiasm, but the animal always fascinated me by its endurance, patience and stupidity. I remember the excitement I felt when I once had to travel by camel continuously for six days.

In our village no one bothered with newspapers; not even half a dozen persons could have read them. And where were the newspapers in those days? No one in the village could read and write English. Nor was there a school. A few people could read and write simple Hindi or Urdu, but perhaps only one in a hundred. At the age of four I was put under a tutor who claimed to know more arithmetic than reading and writing. And so my education began with figures—addition, subtrac-

tion, multiplication, division etc. At the age of nine I learnt a little reading and writing and got a smattering of English. My school education, however, ended with the *First Book of Reading* by Pyarecharan Sarkar, when I was only eleven.

My great-grandfather was a manager in a commercial house on a paltry pittance of Rs. 10/- per month and when he died, my grandfather, at the age of eighteen, decided to start his own independent business and so went forth to Bombay to seek his fortune. Subsequently my father expanded the concern and when I was born we were considered to be quite a well-to-do family with an established business stretching back nearly 35 years. Thus when I concluded my so-called schooling I was directed to join the family business and, at the age of twelve, I took a plunge into it. But I was fond of learning, and continued my self-inflicted education even after leaving school. Somehow or other I hated to be taught by a teacher, so after I left school, my books, the newspapers, a dictionary and a copy-book became my main tutors. It was in this way that I learnt English, Sanskrit and one or two other Indian languages, History and Economics, and read quite a large number of biographies and chronicles of travels, of which I am still fond.

Perhaps my reading may have inspired me to work for the political freedom of the country and to make contacts with the political leaders of the day. The Russo-Japanese War had created a wave of enthusiasm among the Asiatic nations and India did not escape this surge. As a child my sympathies were definitely with Japan, and the ambition of seeing India free began to excite me. But, as I have said, we had no political background in the family or the village or the community in which I was born. My interest in politics, therefore, was not looked upon with great favour by those around me. But all this was not enough to attract me towards Gandhiji

and so I still believe that it was the kind hand of Fate that brought me to him.

When I was sixteen I started an independent business of my own as a broker, and thus began my contact with Englishmen, who were my patrons and clients. During my association with them I began to see their superiority in business methods, their organising capacity and their many other virtues. But their racial arrogance could not be concealed. I was not allowed to use the lift to go up to their offices, nor their benches while waiting to see them. I smarted under these insults, and this created within me a political interest which, from 1912 until to-day, I have fully maintained. There were no political leaders, apart from the late Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Gokhale, with whom I did not associate; there were no political moves in the country in which I did not take a deep interest and try to help in my own way.

Having involved myself with the terrorists of those days, I once got into serious trouble and had to go 'underground' for nearly three months. The intervention of some kindly friends saved me from prison. It must be said, however, that I never had a great taste for terrorism, and after my contact with Gandhiji whatever traces remained were altogether eradicated.

With this background it was natural that I should be attracted towards Gandhiji. I started as his critic and ultimately became his fast devotee. It would be totally incorrect, however, to say that I agreed with Gandhiji on all points. In fact, on most problems I took my own independent counsel. There was not much in common between us so far as our mode of life went. Gandhiji was a saintly person who had renounced all the comforts and luxuries of life. Religion was his main absorption and this interest of his drew me irresistibly towards him. His outlook on economics, however, was different. He believed in small-scale industries—*Charkha*, *Ghani* and all that. I, on the other hand, led a fairly comfortable

life and believed in the industrialisation of the country through large-scale industries. How then did we come to have such a close association? Why did I continue to inspire his trust and affection? I should attribute this mainly to his greatness and generosity. I have not come across many men possessing the charm, the affection and the devotion to their friends that Gandhiji had. A saint is not very difficult for the world to produce, and political leaders are put forth in plenty, but real men are not to be found in abundance on this earth. Gandhiji was a man among men—a rare specimen not produced by the world even once in a century. And yet people have known so little of him as a man. The result was that, although I did not agree with him on many problems, I never refused to obey his wishes. For his part, he not only tolerated my independence of thought, but loved me all the more for it, as a father would his child. Our relations, therefore, became more in the nature of a family attachment, of a father towards a son, which lasted to the end of his life.

The last that I saw of him was his dead body. It was the cruelty of fate that I was not with him when he breathed his last. I left him only ten hours before he died. I had to go to my village—a place about 120 miles from Delhi—where I had taken an important Minister to show him my educational institutions. I left my house in the morning at 7 o'clock. Before leaving, I went to Gandhiji's room to say good-bye. But he was resting and was fast asleep, so I did not disturb him. Ten hours later, in Pilani, my son came rushing to tell me that the radio had announced that Gandhiji had been shot dead by an assassin. I could not believe it. But there was no escape.

It was not possible to return at once to Delhi, for even to-day the village is unconnected either by railway or road, so I had to stay there overnight. I had a disturbed sleep. I dreamt that I had gone back to my house in

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Delhi where Gandhiji had been staying and went into his room, to find his dead body lying prostrate. On my entering he sat up and said: 'I am glad you have returned. This shooting is no stray incident, it was a deep conspiracy. But I am glad they have done away with me. I have done my work and I don't regret that I am departing.' We talked for some time. After that he took out his watch and said, 'Now it is time for the funeral and people will come to take me away, and so I am lying down.' And he lay back and became motionless. What a dream! But it was perhaps the echo of my own heart.

Next morning I returned to my house in Delhi and entered the room where his dead body was lying. A crowd of a million people had surrounded Birla House. He was lying calm and serene. He did not look as if he were dead. That was the last that I saw of him.

Years before, in a letter dated 16 June 1940, Mahadev Desai told me that he had had a letter from the Private Secretary to Lord Linlithgow saying that the German wireless had broadcast the news that British agents were planning Gandhiji's assassination, but expressing a fear that the wish was father to the thought and that it might well be that German agents might plan this thing in order to create propaganda against the British. It was, therefore, as well for everyone to be careful, and would Gandhiji care to have unobtrusive police placed about him? His Excellency would be very glad to arrange it. Mahadev said he replied, 'Gandhiji wants no such thing, as having lived under the threat of assassination for a generation he had come to learn by experience that not a blade of grass moves except by His will and no assassin can curtail anybody's life or a friend protect it.' Mahadev added that this was in Bapu's own language. How truly events were casting their shadow nearly eight years before the end came! But it was neither German nor

British agents who acted for Destiny. The assassin was an Indian—an orthodox Hindu.

After the first attempt to kill Gandhiji with a bomb proved abortive, very strong security measures were taken by the Government, so much so that in every nook and corner of my house sentries and plain-clothes armed police were seen loitering. I felt unhappy over this excessive precaution.

In 1913 Lord Hardinge, the then Viceroy, had gone to Banaras to lay the foundation stone of the Banaras Hindu University. Previously a bomb had been thrown at him while he was entering the new Capital in procession. Strong security measures were therefore taken to guard his life in Banaras. Police with rifles and revolvers were posted even in nearby ponds. Gandhiji detested the need for all this fuss and publicly criticised the fact that the Viceroy should be made to suffer a living death.

I once reminded Gandhiji of these remarks of his and added, 'Is it not unseemly that even our prayers should be held under the shadow of bayonets? I am jealous of your life, but more than that I am jealous of your reputation. Will you allow this over-policing when you have hated all such measures throughout your life?' Gandhiji agreed and said, 'Try to find out from Vallabhbhai who is responsible for all this. I hate these measures, but I have to tolerate them, not to protect myself, but to protect the reputation of the Government.' I did talk to Sardar afterwards and, as was his habit, he tersely replied, 'Why are you worried? This is not your business. The responsibility is mine. Left to myself I should like to search every man entering Birla House, but Bapu will not let me.' Cruel fate willed, and in Mahadev's words, but Gandhiji's language, 'No friend could protect him.' I myself used to attend the prayers with a pistol concealed in my belt and used to watch every soul who moved towards him. But this was all vanity. 'Not a blade of grass moves except by His will!'

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Very nearly two years after this event, another big soul departed to whom I was equally attached. That was Sardar Patel. He was the staunchest follower of the Mahatma in every respect and especially so in austerity. He was called an iron man who, under his posed stiffness, concealed any amount of softness. He too had his independent views and yet, in every move, political or social, followed the lead of his Master. He quarrelled with him privately and followed him publicly. It is curious that many big men in India differed from Gandhiji, yet followed him, often blindly. It was undoubtedly his charm and loyalty to his friends which made him achieve this paradoxical miracle, and so although Sardar did not agree with him on some points, he followed him unreservedly on every occasion. Sardar developed coronary thrombosis after Gandhiji died. It was the shock of Gandhiji's death that broke his heart. An ordinary mortal would have wept and thus let off steam, but Sardar did not show his grief and so it went to his heart. I came under his spell some 28 years before his death, and our mutual attachment continued to the end.

Though Sardar, too, died in my house, it is another irony of Fate that I was not with him during his last moments. He left Delhi for Bombay four days before his death. A very large number of his friends, including some Ministers, came to see him off at the aerodrome. Sitting in a chair, he saluted everyone with a sad smile from the door of the aeroplane. He knew that he was going to pass away very soon. I too knew that he was soon going to embark upon his Endless Journey, but I persuaded myself into believing that the end was not so near, so I was left behind. Four days later he left us for ever. The last that I saw of Sardar too was just his dead body.

Mahadev Desai died in 1942 while in the Aga Khan Palace, which had been converted into a prison. He too was a fast friend, and died in the lap of his Master when

his friends were not near him. He was the dearest of men. Mahadev was made by the Mahatma, but it would not be incorrect to say that, to some extent, the Mahatma too was moulded by Mahadev. Mahadev Desai was a man of great charm and affection, extremely learned and possessed of great persuasive powers. Whenever he found Bapu obstinate in some matter, it was only Sardar and Mahadev who could divert the great leader from his path. And many a time he was compelled to yield, often after a loss of temper and many a time after a hearty laugh.

What would the history of India be to-day if all these three were alive and in robust health, with another ten or fifteen years span of life before them? This is a pointless speculation. I believe a man departs when his task ends. We need not mourn them. The burden of responsibility is now on the generation of to-day and of the future. Perhaps these pages may pass on some of the inspiration that these men have left behind for us.

On 18th July, 1935, I met Mr. Baldwin in London. In the course of conversation he made the following remarks which I noted down at the time:

‘Democracy has its defects, but it has proved to be the best system so far. Thank God, we have not got dictatorship in this country. A benevolent dictatorship is a very good thing in its own way, but then under such a dictatorship you have to do nothing but sit back. Now this is wrong. Under democracy all of you have to work. This is the best virtue of democracy. Now this experiment in India therefore will succeed if everyone works. It is an experiment in democracy, and so without everyone working, it can never succeed . . . In a democracy a section could be nasty. We should not judge people by these sections, but the Congress as such must realise that there is great scope for them to do good to their country.’

On the 18th July 1937, Bapu wrote to me after we

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assumed responsibility for establishing a democratic government saying, 'Our real trouble begins now. So much is good that our future depends on our strength, truthfulness, courage, determination, diligence and discipline. What you have been doing is good . . . In the end, what has been done is done in the name of God and with trust in God. Good you will be. Good you remain. I give you my blessings.'

Mr. Baldwin had said, 'Under democracy all of you have to work.' Bapu emphasized that our future would depend on our 'strength, truthfulness, courage, determination, diligence and discipline.' Both said the same thing in a different manner, and they should serve as our beacon.

CHAPTER I

I WAS AN OUTCAST

THIS is a book about the importance of knowing people, the value of personal contact. I have compiled it from my files of the correspondence between myself and others covering more than a quarter of a century, and from copies of documents sent me by Gandhiji and others in this critical period of history. In India we are emotional. We respond to friendship; we are moved by love and sympathy; we feel pity. We are also capable of strong hatreds, but these are generally against aggregates and systems; and if they are against individuals they are as often as not against those whom we have not met or seen, and more often than not they are against those whose names are made odious to us by propaganda concerning them. Contact reveals truth, and sometimes even unpleasant truths, as supposed swans may turn out to be geese. In his penetrating letter on the misdeeds of some comrades who gave up their professions to take up the national cause and were then forced to make a living in devious ways, the late Mahadev Desai gave a prophetic warning of danger in this respect. But in the main the good we discover in others by knowing them better far outweighs the evil, as my story shows. Wise men have always made 'Know thyself' a first motto; the second and third are probably 'Know each other' and 'Do to others as you would be done by'; and these involve personal contact, except for those who can live and die unto themselves, which most of us cannot do.

As upon most of my countrymen, Gandhiji has exercised a deep influence upon me. Inevitably I looked forward to the day when India would be independent, though I never doubted the good faith of the British people and their Parliament when they declared that this also was their goal in India. Gandhiji in his earlier phases also

had this confidence, but the Rowlatt Report and the subsequent Act (which, by the way, was never applied) undermined it. Such connection as I have had with politics is in the economic field, but I sought to prevent the growing distrust which the British in India entertained of Gandhiji's high motives and the passionate distrust which Indians felt in regard not merely to the English in India but towards British statesmen and the British Parliament. Gandhiji was the dominant influence in my life because of my feeling as a Hindu. I come of a family of merchants which has a tradition of *sanatan dharma*, the eternal religion of duty. My grandfather and those like him may be compared to the Quakers in England and America. Like the Quakers, they prospered miraculously in business affairs but considered it their duty to spend freely on good works. Like the Quakers, they were not 'orthodox', that is to say they were not bound rigidly by caste restrictions; the Birla Education Trust has served to give an impetus to the emancipation of women, and to train Harijans or outcasts—whose cause Gandhiji championed so warmly—for careers on a footing of equality. However, it is not for me here to speak about the work of the Birla Education Trust. My point is that Gandhiji's influence over me was more through his religious character—his sincerity and search for truth—than his power as a political leader. Often I could not follow his reasoning and sometimes I disagreed with him, but always there was the belief that he must somehow be right in a sense that I could not grasp. Whatever sum he asked from me (and he was, as he put it, an inveterate beggar for the causes he worked for) he knew that he would get, because there was nothing I could refuse him. But he was never a dictator and was essentially humble. Also, as the correspondence shows, whenever I could not follow his argument and said so, he took criticism without the slightest anger. He was not being merely

considerate or conventionally polite when he said he regarded his friends as his mentors. He was willing to take their advice, provided it would not deflect him from his search for ultimate truth, the reality behind all created things, God, the Creator!

It was in 1924, when he had completed his autobiography *My Experiments with Truth* that I first began to keep my correspondence with him and with others on kindred subjects. I was in great trouble and it was to Bapu that I naturally turned for advice. The Marwari Community, a very 'orthodox' one, was boycotting my family socially for our modernism. This roused me to anger, and I was in no mood to practise Gandhian *ahimsa*, and take things lying down. I had already written to Gandhiji, suggesting that he was too gentle and trustful in dealing with opponents and that some of his swans were geese. His reply was that he did not trust anybody too much but 'when both parties are in the wrong it becomes difficult to decide how much one is to blame more than the other. I have therefore thought out a sample plan—to do good even to the evil doer.' Now when I inveighed against the benighted bigots in my community, he calmed me with assurances which have since been fulfilled :

Juhu, Bombay,
13th May, 1924.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,
Your letter.

I am sure an attitude of tolerance towards opposition from members of your community will bear fruit in the end. We all have, working within us, both divine and dark forces. Therefore some amount of agitation is bound to persist. But there is nothing to be afraid of. Sustained resistance will ultimately defeat the forces of darkness. But we must believe at heart that it is our duty to help the forces of light. I am anxious about your father and brother. If they are thinking of organising those in your favour and fighting out the issue and you are not able to keep them on the path of peace, what is to be dreaded is the possibility of the birth of two mutually hostile tendencies. On such

occasions we are on the horns of a dilemma as to what exactly we should do. I would also pray them to desist from a course of action which might lead to two hostile factions in your own community.

I certainly would not advise you to apologise for something which you did simply because you considered it the right thing to do and about the worthiness of which even to-day you have no misgivings whatsoever.

I got Rs. 5,000/- sent on your behalf. You can send whatever amount you consider reasonable for *Young India* and *Navjivan*. About fifty copies are to be given free.

Yours sincerely,
MOHANDAS GANDHI

On 11th June I wrote to Gandhiji:—

Your letters always give me fresh solace. There are two groups now, but their actions are not based on any principle. We have acted 'selflessly' to a certain extent, even though that has meant a certain amount of suffering; still I would not say our deeds have been as free from blemish as they ought to have been. This may be due to a family weakness as also to religious scruples. It will do great good to people if you keep writing on social topics in the *Navjivan*.

The Swarajists have openly declared for violence at the Sirajganj conference, thus tearing off the mask of non-violence. The sham practised in the name of non-violence is now over. It is quite possible you will now be reduced to a minority, but from the standpoint of purity with which work will be done in future it will be a gain so great that I cannot properly conceive the strength generated by it.

You have preached non-violence to me and I have listened to you in full faith. But away from your presence, I am assailed by misgivings of all sorts. I have not an iota of doubt that non-violence is an excellent objective. But supposing a man of your type, who, though in this world, is not of it, kills another for the good of the world, will that be termed violence? What I believe is that any selfless action done without attachment is *akarma* (inaction). But if a common man who is not free from the temptations of the world, kills somebody, it would be a case of manslaughter, pure and simple. But can this kind of killing not be reduced to some well-defined method? You yourself have

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said it is better to return a blow for a blow than to take to one's heels. What I cannot comprehend is advising people to act according to this extreme form of non-violence. You also advise people to receive blows from lathis uncomplainingly—which is something too much to expect from them. Why they should not be asked to wield the sword, is something I do not understand. I also fear that it may so happen that people neither achieve the best type of non-violence nor use the sword to protect the honour of their wives and daughters. Now that the Hindu Mahasabha and the Aryasamaj have exhorted people to wield the sword, the Muslims are a little bit afraid of attacking them. I know this intensifies the quarrel now, but I am not sure that this would not be the last of the quarrels.

We also find that those Hindus who were converted to Islam two hundred years ago are now as bigoted Muslims as those originally hailing from Arabia or Iran, though at the time of their conversion they must have felt strongly against their converters. This proves that *shuddhi* ensured by force can ultimately lead to the establishment of harmonious relations between the Hindus and the neo-converts. You tell me reforms ensured by force are not lasting, but when I find that the British could put an end to the odious practice of *suttee* with the help of force why could not other reforms also be carried out by the same means? You told me Islam did not spread with the help of the sword, but I have gathered from old writings that a large number of Hindus were converted to Islam forcibly. In 1829 Lord Bentinck mentioned in one of his dispatches to the Directors of the East India Company that the Muslims resorted to force in claiming new converts.

We can even popularise khadi and ensure the boycott of British goods by means of a protective tariff which is a form of brute force. If the Government so wishes, it can put a stop to many social evils. This being the position, I do not see any harm if the Arya Samajists do a bit of proselytizing by resorting to force and thereby add to the number of the Hindus. There is not the least doubt that those Muslims who are taken into the Hindu fold forcibly would come to love the Hindus as much as the latter do each other.

I should like to make it clear, however, that I do not at all approve of these violent methods. I am inclined towards non-violence, but at times I begin to ask myself if this propensity is

IN THE SHADOW OF THE MAHATMA

not the result of sheer inertia. I have only set forth my doubts and should like to have convincing answers to them.

If, however, you hold that the purity of the means employed should be kept unsullied irrespective of whether we are successful or not, then I have nothing whatever to say. But those who do not seek salvation and follow the ordinary course of life would be extremely disinclined to do anything, however good in itself, without taking into account its consequences. They are concerned with the objective ; they do not worry about the means employed in achieving it.

I should like to stress once again that violent methods are becoming increasingly distasteful to me, and that I have written all this just to get my difficulties solved.

Yours affectionately,

GHANSHYAMDAS

20th June, 1924.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

Your letter.

We should remain non-violent and unmindful of whether we succeed or fail in our undertaking. This is the only natural way of explaining the principle of non-violence. A more proper way of understanding non-violence is having a firm faith in its sure success. Let us not concern ourselves as to whether our efforts are crowned with success to-day or years later. Those who were forcibly converted to Islam say two hundred years ago cannot be a source of strength to it inasmuch as the policy of compulsion was resorted to in converting them. Similarly there lie hidden the germs of destruction in the propagation of Hinduism through force of deceit. What happens is that we are misled by immediate results ; in a large society two hundred years are a mere nothing.

But to make people give up their bad habits with the help of law cannot be described as the use of violence or brute force. To stop the sale of liquor by law and thus force people to give up the habit of drinking is not violence. If it were suggested that those given to drinking should be whipped, it would certainly be brute force. Selling liquor is not our duty.

Yours sincerely,

BAPU

Evidently I was not convinced, and must have returned to the charge, as his next letter shows:—

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20th July, 1924.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

God has given me mentors, and I regard you as one of them. Among them are some of my own children, some sisters and some others like yourself and Jamnalalji* who are grown-up. They all wish me to become a perfect man. Understanding this, how can I be offended with your letter? I want you to always caution me like this.

You complain against three things: *First*, my absolving the Swarajya Party from the charge of aspiring to Office; *second*, my granting a testimonial to Suhrawardy; and *third*, my endeavouring to secure the Congress Presidentship for Sarojini.

In the first place after necessary suffering it becomes a man's duty to say only that which he holds to be the truth, even though the world views it as a mistake. Nothing else can make a man fearless. I regard my salvation as the dearest of all objectives, but if that salvation goes against Truth and Non-Violence I will give up the former for the latter. Among these three I have always served Truth. When I say this, I have in mind what you told me at Juhu. In the absence of any definite proof it becomes my duty to treat the Swarajya party as innocent of the charge. If you give me proof I assure you of my fullest consideration.

As regards Suhrawardyji, I only testified to his wisdom and I am having practical experience of it even now.

You are unnecessarily worried about Sarojini. She has served India well, and is still doing so. While I have done nothing in particular just now for her presidentship, I am convinced that if others who have so far occupied that position, were fit for it, she too is fit. Everybody is enamoured of her enthusiasm, I myself bear witness to her courage. I have noticed nothing wrong about her.

But from all this you need not infer that I approve of all that she or anybody else does.

*God has inhabited this our world with objects
Living and inanimate, good, bad, indifferent;*

*The wise are concerned only with the good
Just as the swan sucks milk, leaving water alone.*

Yours sincerely,
MOHANDAS GANDHI

* Seth Jamnalal Bajaj.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE MAHATMA

Keep good health, and I will get a lot of work out of you ; and also give you some. Take milk for at least fifteen days if you like. Take fruit, but no bread. Make it a rule to take butter-milk.

15th September, 1924.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

I have been getting your letters. I am not alarmed about the Jubbulpore affair. I have done what self-penance I had the power to do and, therefore, I am content. It is not given to us mortals to clamour for reward which lies with God alone. I do intend to undertake a tour in company with several front-rank leaders as soon as I feel better. First of all, I wish to proceed to Kohat. I hope to be ready in eight days.

When the time comes, I shall myself ask for your help in all possible ways.

I am getting much help from you and yours here.

Kindly send the money to Jamnalalji or to the Ashram.

Yours sincerely,
MOHANDAS GANDHI

This was a bad year in Hindu-Muslim relations. There were several ugly riots, and then as always Bapu sought earnestly for reconciliation. In the autumn he fasted in Delhi for twenty-one days, but with little tangible result. Much of our correspondence turned on this subject. Bapu wrote: 'We ourselves are to blame for the attacks on Hindu women. We have become too effeminate to be able to protect our sisters. I propose to write a lot on this subject. I have no simple remedy for this evil. Making allowance for the usual exaggeration in reports of this type, there is enough to make our heads hang down in shame.'

These events in no wise lessened his concern for Muslim welfare, as the next letter shows :—

Wankaner, 21-2-1925.

My dear Shriyut Ghanshyamdasji,

The Muslim University of Aligarh is at present in straitened circumstances. I have assured those brothers that I would try to

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get money for them. They are trying to raise a certain amount. I told them that I would try to get help to the extent of Rs. 50,000/- for them. Please give this matter your consideration, and if you feel inclined to give the entire amount, or even a part of it, please let me know. I am making a deep study of the Hindu-Muslim question. My conviction is influencing Hindu society, even though I see great difficulties in the way. I am touring Kathiawar at present. This journey will be over to-day.

22nd March, 1925.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

Your two letters.

You have taken a load of worry off my mind as regards the Muslim University. I would certainly not wish your donation to be the cause of dispute among yourself and your brothers. I will not disclose your name.

As regards the property acquired by you in Chhota Nagpur, I am opposed to the idea of giving it up just on account of the death of some of your employees. There is not much difference between landed property and property in the shape of money ; and property is often the cause of quarrels, even of murder. A way out of your dilemma is to give up the property altogether. For this you are not prepared at present. But, as I have said, property being the cause of so many quarrels and a temptation for so many misdeeds, it is better to give it up, and to act as its trustee for such time as would be needed to make one ready to relinquish it altogether, the income derived therefrom being devoted more to the good of others than to the well-being of one's self. There is another possibility. Has an attempt been made to get in touch with the gentleman who is causing trouble ? What is this present restlessness due to ?—his own foolishness, may be, but his land was not acquired for a song, and even a knave would not like to throw away his property. Lo, I have started quite a different kind of discussion.

Is your wife feeling better now ?

I am leaving Madras on the 24th.

Yours,
MOHANDAS GANDHI

26th March, 1925.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

Here is Hakim Saheb's telegram. Can you send me Rs. 25,000/- now? If so, it may be sent either on Hakim Saheb's address or to me in Bombay care of Jamnalalji. If it could be credited at Delhi probably some saving might be made in commission. I shall be available at the Ashram till April, after which I shall be proceeding to Kathiawar again. I have got to reach Faridpur on May 2.

Yours,
MOHANDAS GANDHI

Bapu presented me with a special *charkha*, and took great interest in my spinning. He even went so far as to compliment me on the quality of my yarn.

30th March, 1925.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

I am in receipt of your letter.

Your yarn is quite good. I hope you will never give up the sacred work you have started. As regards your wife, you can take a vow that in case she breathes her last you will lead the life of a celibate and will not marry again. In case you have the inclination and the strength to take this vow, it is better to take it before your wife.

As regards the amount of Rs. 20,000/-, I shall make enquiries from Jamnalalji's Office.

Shri Raichandji and myself were quite close to one another. I do not concede that he excelled me in the observance of truth and non-violence, but I do believe that he surpassed me in the knowledge of the sacred scriptures and the retentive capacity of his memory. He had self-knowledge and self-confidence from his childhood. I know for a fact that he had not finally succeeded in breaking loose the bonds that tie one to this world, and he himself knew that he had not, but he was progressing fast in that direction. I know his views on Buddhadev and others. More about him when we meet. My stay in Bengal begins in the month of May.

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I had appealed to you for Rs. 25,000/- for Aligarh. I have also sent you Hakimji's telegram.

Yours sincerely,
MOHANDAS GANDHI

Sabarmati Ashram,
9th April, 1925.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

Your letter. Enclosed please find a receipt I got from Jamnalalji's office. This amount, being your contribution to the Deshbandhu Memorial Fund, was included in the cheque sent by you. That receipts are issued after deducting draft charges, is a thing I am learning for the first time.

What more can I say about Hindu-Muslim quarrels? I fully understand what is proper for us to do; but I also know that whatever I say at present will be just a cry in the wilderness. Who can drive away the bee perched on honey? Who can arrest the momentum of the moth circling around the candle-stick?

I have benefited a great deal by not going to Mussoorie. Why did you send a telegram from Delhi about going to Mussoorie after the meeting here? But who can destroy him whom God protects?

As regards Finland, I do not know how I should like to act. There are equally weighty reasons for and against my going there; and just because I have not yet been able to decide either way, I have told my hosts about my conditions, if they accept conditions of my presence there I think I must go.

Let us see what takes place at the All-India Congress Committee meeting.

Yours,
MOHANDAS

Needless to say my own experience as an outcast from my community greatly increased my sympathies with the 'depressed classes', and made me most willing to further Bapu's campaign for the Harijans. A good deal of our correspondence related to that, but I shall not trouble my readers with these details, as the subject of the Harijans recurs later. Bapu, by the way, showed his native shrewdness in business by suggestions as to

where cheques should be paid so as to effect saving on commission for collection ! Here let me say that lack of personal contact with the Harijans had let orthodox Hindus, including such good people as Pandit Malaviya, overlook their essential humanity. Except on the national issue the correspondence reveals a fundamental cleavage of opinion between Bapu and the Pandit. Though opposed to the formation of the Swaraj Party and its entry into the Legislatures, he was more in sympathy with its orthodox leaders, Motilal Nehru and C. R. Das.

Friday, 7th August, 1925.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

I had sent a reply to your letter through Jamnalalji. When I got your lengthy letter, I sent a detailed reply and sent it under a registered cover to your Solon address. I fail to understand why it did not reach you.

Let me recapitulate what I wrote in it. I had praised your action in contributing Rs. 1,00,000/- to the Deshbandhu Memorial Fund, and had prayed for an early payment of the money.

I had also given in it my reasons for not co-operating with respected Malaviyaji and respected Lalaji but had promised a deep sense of respect for both. I help Pandit Motilal and the Swarajya Party because after all their ideals do resemble mine to some extent. There is no question of my helping individuals.

I wrote many other things in that letter ; but I cannot recall all of them.

I hope both of you are improving in health. You must have heard of my fast. That I am gathering more energy will be evident from the fact that I am writing this to you. I hope to be able to undertake physical work in a few days.

I shall reach Wardha on the 10th and stay there for some ten days.

Yours sincerely,
MOHANDAS

My wife was already afflicted with an illness which proved fatal. Bapu's solicitude, and his suggestions for treatment were continuous. Characteristically he also wrote his views upon sex questions :—

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Bombay, 13th April, 1925.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

Your two letters to hand. You have discontinued giving dates in your letters. Please resume the old practice because if there are no dates, it is not possible for me to know during my tour as to which letter was penned when.

Hakimji has sailed for Europe. I made enquiries from Khawaja Saheb if the money had been received. Please let me know when you get any news. On making enquiries from Jamnalalji's office I learned that they have so far received Rs. 30,000/- in all from you. The cashier has duly acknowledged receipt of the money which was received in two instalments : Rs. 10,000/- on 1-11-24 and Rs. 20,000/- on 5-1-25.

If the doctors give hope, why fear your wife's death ? I know from experience that it is very difficult to control our desires ; still therein lies our duty. I have great faith in the efficacy of Ram Nam in this sinful age. I know of friends who have greatly benefited from Ram Nam. Ram Nam is only God's name. Scriptural texts also stand for the same thing. It is better to chant a name to which one is accustomed. We live in a sex-ridden age, and the problem of self-control is frequently coming up. It grieves me much to read journals devoted to contraception. I find many writers holding the view that it is our duty to indulge in sex. In such an atmosphere my support to the doctrine of self-restraint must seem very queer. How can I forget my own experience ? There are means of attaining the state of absolute detachment and the name of Rajaram is one of them. Chanting Ram Nam in the morning and praying to Him to bless one with the state of absolute detachment, certainly bring His blessing—to some today and to others tomorrow. Let there be God's imageless image constantly present before our mind. Practice will make this possible.

I shall be reaching Bengal on Prathma, leaving Calcutta for Faridpur the same day.

Yours sincerely,
Bandemataram from MOHANDAS

The following letter reflects Bapu's practical mind in striving for the ideal of cow-protection.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

Patna, 1st July, 1925.

Your letter. I do not intend to trouble you much about Lohani just now.

Jamnalalji was telling me that the amount of Rs. 25,000/- meant for the Muslim University was to be taken from the Rs. 60,000/- promised by you at Juhu. And I was planning to spend Rs. 60,000/- on other things. But if what you meant was in fact not what I thought you meant, I have nothing to say.

There is another thing. You know my views on cow-protection. Shri Madhusudandas owns a tannery at Cuttack which he has developed into a limited company. I feel like acquiring a majority of its shares with a view to controlling it for public benefit in the interest of cow-protection. The tannery's liabilities amount to Rs. 1,20,000/-. It is necessary to rescue it from this dead-weight. The tannery uses only carcass hides, but hides of specially killed patalgho are also used. In case it is decided to take over the tannery, three conditions should be insisted on :—

1. Only hides of dead animals will be taken ;
2. The practice of killing patalgho [a four-legged reptile] for the sake of its hide must be discontinued ;
3. The idea of purchasing yarn must be given up and profits devoted to expansion of the tannery.

I would like you to take over the tannery provided it is available on these terms ; I would also like you to undertake its management. If that is not practicable, I shall find out somebody who can manage it. The tannery owns a few acres of land which I have seen myself. Shri Madhusudandas has spent quite a considerable amount on it from his own pocket.

Then there is a third proposition. The A.-I. Spinners' Asscn. and you can co-operate in this work. I would like you to donate a handsome amount to A.-I. Deshbandhu Memorial Fund.

Jamnalalji will have a detailed talk with you on all these three schemes, provided he happens to meet you at Delhi.

Is your wife feeling better ?

I shall be in Bihar till the 15th.

Yours sincerely,
MOHANDAS GANDHI

I don't remember what I wrote to deserve the reproach in the following letters :—

November, 1925.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

Your letter.

As for my article I am sure I have saved Ba * from a wrong. Ba also seems to take things in this light ; otherwise, she could not have moved about with me with such a light heart. I have rescued Chhaganlal and Ba from several baseless accusations. I doubt if anybody else in our society has tested to the extent I have the sweet joy of a public confession of one's own guilt. My only surprise is that you have been unable to appreciate this.

* His wife.

The reader will have observed frequent references by Bapu to financial matters in his letters. I was doing my best to support him with money—the commodity which he most lacked—in his struggle to help the depressed classes. These references will continue to appear in his letters; they indicate his acute and practical competence in business matters.

Sabarmati,

3rd January, 1926.

My dear Rameshwardasji,

Your letter. Jamnalalji is here at present. He informs me that his office has received Rs. 10,000/-. I shall utilise this money in the service of the depressed classes.

Yours sincerely,
MOHANDAS GANDHI

I was glad to learn that you are keeping quite fit.

The Hindu-Muslim problem was a burning question.

Ashram, Sabarmati,
Friday, 16-4-26.

My dear Shri Ghanshyamdas,

Your letter and a cheque for Rs. 26,000/- have arrived. You have asked several questions relating to the Hindu-Muslim problems, to which I am replying, but it is not for the press. As I have already told you, at present my voice does not count

with the Hindu public, or at least with that section of it which takes part in such disturbances. Therefore, what I say has the opposite effect. Thus my duty lies only in holding my peace.

1. If the Government has banned processions and it is necessary to take out a procession in some religious celebration, I would consider it my duty to take out the procession in spite of the ban. But before doing so I should entreat the Muslims to be considerate. If this fails to move them, I would take out the procession but, while doing so, would put up with all the hammering Muslims give me. If I have not the capacity to observe non-violence to such an extent, I would take out a procession with full preparations.

2. I would not dismiss Muslim syces etc., merely because of their being Muslim. At the same time, I would not keep a Muslim if he does not do his duty loyally or who is insolent to me. I do not believe that the Muslims are more ungrateful than others ; the only thing that I have seen is that they are comparatively more quarrelsome. It appears to me very unworthy to leave a Muslim simply because he is a Muslim.

3. If a Hindu does not like, or is not equipped for, the ways of peace he should acquire the strength needed in fighting.

4. If the Government favours the Muslims, this should not worry the Hindus. Let them not care for the Government, let them not cringe, but learn to rely on their strength. When the average Hindu will have acquired this much courage, the Government will become neutral and the Muslim will stop leaning on it. Taking help from the Government neither contributes to the performance of duty, nor goes to make one brave. I would advise you to take a detached view of such things, and to act accordingly. Therein lies the good of the Hindu community, and service to the Hindu religion. This is my lifelong—35 years old—experience. I was very much pleased with the calm, collected manner in which you worked during the riots. Now you should do all that you have to do with the same amount of calmness. If my reply is not quite clear on any point, you can ask again.

I would like to have a portion of the loan, promised by you for the Spinners' Association, on the stocks lying in Bombay. If you like you can take possession of one of these godowns, in which stocks sufficient to cover the amount of the loan will be

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kept—even larger stocks can be kept there because that will save us the rent of a godown, provided you agree. Things should, however, be so arranged that it would be possible for us to take out that extra stock whenever we desire. Stock kept outside the security enjoyed by the Spinners' Association is bound to show a loss ; therefore, some sort of facility should be provided for it.

Yours sincerely,
MOHANDAS

Ashram, Sabarmati,
Sunday, 23-5-26.

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

Your letter duly reached me. I have sent Jamnalalji a copy of your letter containing a promise to advance a loan for Khadi.

I was simply taken aback about the Sabarmati Agreement. Even now I have not been able to understand all this. I can understand all about the Hindu-Muslim question, but have been reduced to a state of helplessness. I am still optimistic, simply because I have not yet lost faith in myself. But this much is quite clear to me, that the way in which the Hindu religion is being sought to be protected is not the way to ensure its protection. But I have decided to have complete faith in the adage 'God is the only strength of the weak.' And this has made me quite carefree.

Yours sincerely,
MOHANDAS

The next letter touches upon his differences with Malaviyaji—in this case about my entering actively into politics.

Ashram, Sabarmati,
Tuesday, 8-6-26.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

I am in receipt of your letter. Khadi Pratisthan has so far received nearly Rs. 70,000/- through the Spinners' Association. So far as I can recollect, Rs. 35,000/- have been given to another Ashram, and Rs. 6,000/- to Prabartak Sangh. Some smaller amounts have also been given. Put together, the figure will be approximately Rs. 1,25,000/-. More money will be given in

Bengal. I know the needs of Khadi Pratisthan are great. Satish Babu wishes to expand the scope of his undertaking a great deal, which I like very much myself. But as it is, there is very little money at the disposal of the Spinners' Association. Therefore, while the Spinners' Association will do its best according to its capacity, I would request you to give Satish Babu as much as you can.

What can I write about your entry to the Council? I have a fundamental difference of opinion with Malaviyaji on this subject. The only thing I can say is that if you are convinced that you would be of service to the people by going there you must go. It is not possible to conceive of opposing the Swaraj Party and gaining political experience at the same time. If you are labouring under the belief that you have made a promise before me to keep away from the legislatures, you have got to disabuse your mind of it. No such restraint can be definitely held to have been imposed. You should, therefore, consider yourself free from any such commitment and decide the question of Council entry purely from the point of view of service to the people.

Yours sincerely,
MOHANDAS

The Ashram,
25-7-26.

Dear Ghanshyamdasji,

I enclose herewith a statement that should have been posted with the letter that was sent you the other day.

As regards your previous letter about Khadi Pratisthan Bapu said there was nothing in it which called for any special remark. He agrees with you that business should not be mixed up with philanthropy and that the only form in which you could help the Pratisthan was the loan of Rs. 30,000/- repayable in Jan. '27.

Yours sincerely,
MAHADEV DESAI

Bapu strongly approved my action in declining a knighthood but equally strongly disapproved of my action in standing for the Legislature (I was a member of the 1927 Assembly, but later took his advice and abandoned it). Regarding the knighthood he wrote: 'If you have to decline a title, it is not necessary either to treat the

I WAS AN OUTCAST

Government as your enemy or to consider titles as something evil, though I do regard them as evil, placed as we are.'

At first he was not enthusiastic about my visiting Europe in 1927. But as will be seen, he showed the greatest interest in my trip when it was decided upon.

CHAPTER II

LALA LAJPAT RAI

AMONG my earliest mentors were Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lala Lajpat Rai. Malaviyaji was a man of great learning and completely devoted to the country, but his views were extremely orthodox on all social matters. Lala Lajpat Rai on the other hand was not orthodox in his outlook, but was very impulsive and short-tempered, and he preceded Gandhiji in rousing my interest in the 'untouchables'. 'Harijan' and 'scheduled castes' were then unknown words. Writing to me on December 30, 1923, he said :—

I have been very anxious to meet you ever since I came out of jail. My illness however prevented me from coming to Calcutta, and I had not the courage to ask one of you to come over to see me. I wish to discuss with you the problem of Hindu Unity and how to reclaim the Hindu untouchables. I am afraid the Hindus and the various Hindu organisations make much noise but do very little substantial work. There are some who are fond of collecting funds for posterity, but are not interested in using them to the best advantage at the present time. There are others again who take too many schemes in hand, make all schemes very big and take too much time to come to decisions. To this latter class belongs our revered leader Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. I love him, I respect him, but what I regret in him is his dilatoriness in coming to decisions and in taking action. I am of the opinion that the present is the time for quick decisions and prompt action if we want the Hindu Community to be saved from ambitious and enterprising enemies, the most important problem is how to achieve unity and how to save our depressed classes. Any delay in this latter item will be suicidal. Malaviyaji evidently thinks that the Hindu University will save us, and he is devoting all the money and all the time for the University. Now his work in connection with the University is glorious, and we may well be proud of him and his work. But further extensions of it can wait.

He went on to outline an organisation for which he enlisted my support. He and Pandit Malaviya were also responsible for my brief incursion into politics as M.L.A. for Banaras and Gorakhpur and a member of their 'Responsivist' party.

By 1927 we knew each other much better, and Lala Lajpat Rai decided to give me 'a good talking-to.' Writing to me when we were both in London in July he said:—

I want to tell you quite candidly and frankly what I think of you. You see I had never known you so intimately as I have during the time we were together on the steamer and at Geneva. There are some qualities in you which I admire immensely, but there are some others which I would like to change. My interest in you is that of a father who wants his son to be greater, bigger and better than himself. You have in you the makings of a great leader and all the qualities of a really generous one provided you change your manners a little. Your present manners give an impression of a little curtness and abruptness which might induce some people (who do not know you well) to run away with the idea that you are a conceited man. The best man to learn manners from is Mahatma Gandhi. His manners come very near perfection; though there is nothing perfect in this world. Great as he is, greatest of us all, he is very particular in his behaviour towards his friends and co-workers. You can never charge him with neglect or inattention or incivility. He may differ from you but he gives you a full hearing and is never abrupt in announcing his decisions. He is firm; no one can charge him with weakness, but he never allows his firmness to be misunderstood for haughtiness. He has free and full discussions even with those who are not his equals in any sense of the term. You are still young and inexperienced; you possess a good intellect and a very ready mind. You must pardon me for saying that as a political leader, which you must develop into in the course of time, you would require a different kind of equipment, both mental and that of manners from the one which went to make you a successful businessman.

I am in the evening of my life. Gandhiji and Malaviya are already dying by inches. May they live long. There are

not many men among the Hindus on whom we could desire the mantle of leadership to fall. Among the intellectuals, I place my hopes in Jayakar and among businessmen on you. Moreover Jayakar belongs to Bombay. We want a reliable Hindu leader who would inspire love and confidence among his colleagues and co-workers to lead the Hindus of North India. There is none at present on whom I could lay my finger. I have my hopes in you and that is the reason why I have taken the liberty of writing this letter to you. My love and patriotism have tempted me to do so. Please pardon me if you think I am unnecessarily meddling and presumptuous. In that case drop the letter into the waste-paper basket and never think of it again.

* * *

May God bless you is the earnest prayer of

Your sincere well-wisher,
LAJPAT RAI

I don't know how far I was impressed with this letter, but I knew my own limitations and had no ambition of becoming a 'leader'. So I took his advice as a young man takes advice from all elderly persons.

He followed that up with a rebuke from Paris:—

Paris, 6th July, 1927.

I am still in Paris. You will pardon me for frankly telling you that I was a bit hurt by your not coming to see me before my departure from London. In my judgment you did not act rightly in absenting yourself from Sir Shadi Lal's dinner and Mr. Patel's reception. You need not have eaten but you should have come. It is so important to be civil and courteous and to impress people favourably. You are a rich man, and that is all the more reason for your observing the formal courtesies of life. I wish that people should learn to love you for your virtues other than those connected with your riches. I think you should change a little and follow your two worshipful leaders (Gandhiji and Malaviyaji) in being *considerate* even in small matters.

I am going to Vichy either tomorrow or the day after. I am very grateful for the trip and shall write to you again from Vichy. I am trying to get my teeth examined here. London is

LALA LAJPAT RAI

so frightfully expensive in these things that I reserved further medical examination for Paris.

Yours sincerely,
LAJPAT RAI

Even after this reproach I developed no great attraction for parties and dinners !

Hotel Radio, Vichy, 9-7-27.

My dear G.D.,

Thanks for your letter which I received this morning. I understand your point of view and I never expected you to come to the station to see me off. All I expected was that you would call at the club or even on the telephone to say good-bye to me. I think such small courtesies are good even among friends and members of the same family. They help in keeping relations sweet.

I think you should have attended both Sir Shadi Lal's dinner and Mr. Patel's reception. Your going to Glasgow is not so important *in my judgment*. At the students' reception I wanted the students to see you ; at the dinner I wanted the Sikhs to do so. However the matter is closed. I am writing all this because I am very much interested in you, and I am glad you take a sweet view of my fault-finding.

I reached this place yesterday. It is raining today, but from what I have seen of Vichy in about an hour, it is a very popular health resort. Virtually there are thousands of visitors, and provision has been made for every comfort both in the hotels and the city. There is a covered walk all round the principal streets which protects you from rain and sun.

The hotel where I am staying is a good one. Of course I am trying, as usual, to spend as little as is consistent with ordinary comforts. I have taken a room without a bathroom to myself at £1-3-0. A room with bath costs 225 francs, i.e. about 2 guineas. But my room opens on a nice view and contains a cabinet in which hot and cold running water can be had day and night. I suffered a great deal from insomnia at Paris. I shall write to you again.

Yours sincerely,
LAJPAT RAI

From Vichy he wrote again on our national characteristics :—

Sunday, 17th July, 1927.

Were you present in the House of Commons on the day of the Indian Debate? Of course much nonsense was talked, but I think there was a substratum of truth in one part of the Under Secretary's speech where he said that the Indian mentality was a handicap in the *material progress* of the Indians. Too much emphasis on the world hereafter and the lack of an assertive fighting mentality is a great hindrance to secular progress. I am more and more convinced that our chief work is to change the mentality of our people and make them more ambitious and aggressive or if not aggressive, at least assertive.

I propose to leave this place on the 29th or 30th, take a trip to Nice and Monte Carlo, and then sail on the 5th of August. I do not know if you are going or will have time to go to Germany.

I have a mind to give up excessive travelling and settle down in one place, Lahore or Delhi or Benares, and engage myself in literary work of a more permanent utility.

There was a touching little postscript:—

PS.—Please excuse me for having disfigured a part of the letter. It contained nothing important but a foolish request for certain articles of luxury, which on better thought I have omitted.

The activities of the Calcutta 'European' Association in London alarmed him:—

21-7-27.

My dear G.D.,

I presume you have read the proceedings of a meeting of Englishmen from India in London, reported in *The Times* of the 20th on page 18. You will now see what friend Colonel Crawford is doing. It is absolutely necessary for you to seriously start a counter-move. Otherwise, purely Indian interests in trade and industries will never come to the forefront. I am convinced that this is no time for a man of your views and patriotism to be absent from India. Every day is vital. Now that you have entered politics, you cannot neglect political issues. Of course your business interests are very important because they supply the sinews of war, but I am inclined to think that the next

six months are very important for India in general and Indian trade and industries in particular. The English are drawing some Indians into their net and starting a powerful organisation and a strong agitation. It is the duty of every Indian to counteract such a move and I think you are in a position to do a great deal. It is not your money I am thinking of, but your influence among Indian businessmen. The more I think of it, the more I am convinced that you should return to the Assembly and use the Simla Session for concerted action. It is difficult to gather so many leading men otherwise. A letter from my grandson informed me that Malaviyaji has permitted you to stay away. I do not know what that means. I am, however, of a different opinion. Events are developing fast and this is no time to stay out. I am already regretting that I came away.

Yours sincerely,

LAJPAT RAI

PS.—It has just struck me to write to you about our living at Simla. I think it will be very useful if we could stay near each other. I have already written to L. Mohan Lal for the same rooms I occupied last year, but his house is very far off and it is very difficult to go about from there. I think your house would be a central place for meetings. If you are writing to Simla, please do reserve three rooms with one or two separate bathrooms for me.

This led him to a fierce attack on religion in a letter from London the same month. The European nations were great not because they followed Christ but because they did not follow him ! We had too many saints in India and Gandhian austerity was a mistake.

Very sensitive and 'touchy', he was inclined to suspect intrigue and enmity where it may not have existed. He took a violent dislike to Vithalbai Patel, speaker of the Assembly, and wrote a painfully depressing account of affairs, which did not help his plan for turning me into a politician, but instead increased my anxiety to be rid of politics. The most remarkable feature of this letter, however, is that it reveals that Lajpat Rai, who eventually lost his life in boycotting the Simon Commis-

sion, was originally strongly opposed to this course, and only did so eventually out of loyalty to others.

2, Court Street, Lahore,
26-9-27.

My dear G.D.,

Your telegram in reply to mine to hand. I am afraid I have no intention at present of going to the Calcutta side though I am very anxious to see you at an early date. My reasons are twofold :—

1st. I am anxious to discuss the question of the Reserve Bank with you.

2ndly. I am also anxious to discuss with you the future of our Party.

On both these matters I have differed from our revered leader Malaviyaji. During the last session we have been working rather at cross purposes. Patel has been playing the 'Narad Muni'. On his return he found, so he told me himself, that the Viceroy was angry with him for having put forward rather revolutionary plans before the British statesmen without consulting him in the matter.

He wanted us, therefore, to announce that we would boycott the Royal Commission if it would not have a majority of Indians on it. I flatly refused to do so. Then he played on Malaviyaji and has done his level best to create a gulf between me and him. So much so that one day I placed my resignation before the party and after I had withdrawn it, Malaviyaji sent it to me in writing. I know for a fact that Patel and Srinivas Iyengar gave him that advice at Patel's house. Unfortunately Malaviyaji had been seeing Patel too often during this session and he could not see through his wily plans. Then Patel sent for Jayakar and proposed to him that we should dissolve our party and join the Congress Party with Motilal as its leader, myself and S. Iyengar as deputies and Jayakar as its Secretary. Quite unnecessarily, he told Jayakar that it was necessary to do so in order to strengthen the hands of Motilal in England. Jayakar frankly referred him to me and said that as the leader of the party I was the person to be spoken to. Patel then sent for me and told me that he wanted that amalgamation to take place *that very week*. I told him that I had no time to

consult my party that week, but that I would do so in the coming week. He said, the thing must be accomplished before we left Simla. I then called a meeting of the party which unanimously resolved not to follow his advice unless and until they knew Motilal's views, and unless they could get a guarantee that nothing would happen to force them to leave the Congress party again.

The Congress Party itself is now divided into several factions, and Jayakar told me that several members were prepared to join our ranks. Malaviyaji had evidently made some kind of promise to Patel. Patel has thus been working to destroy our Party. In the last session at Delhi he was *against Jayakar* and puffed me up at his cost. This session he has been patronising and puffing Jayakar in order to humiliate and insult me with a view to creating a split in our Party.

Even the Congress Party is thoroughly disgusted with him. Jayakar of course is entirely with us and has seen through his game. But Malaviyaji has not. I think I am to blame in this matter also, as I lived so far away from Malaviyaji and gave him opportunities to fall into the snares of Patel. This is a matter on which I wish to talk to you in detail, because on this depends the whole of our future political work.

About the Reserve Bank too, it has been Patel's plan to throw the whole responsibility of its failure *on Malaviyaji*. The latter has not seen through his wily designs. He has been putting up the Congress Party and its leader to compromise with the Government while on the other hand he was stiffening Malaviyaji's back to oppose the Government tooth and nail.

His plan was throughout to put him (*i.e.* M.) in the wrong both with the Government and the Party.

For these reasons I would like you to come to Lahore for a day or two. I would like you to address a public meeting at Lahore and another at Amritsar on your experiences in Europe. It is absolutely necessary for you to become an *All-India Man*. I have my eyes on you and Jayakar for the future leadership of the Hindus in politics, and I wish you to address some public meetings in all provinces. When going to Benares, can't you come to Lahore for a day? Can't you come to preside over some depressed classes conference which we might arrange for you? Once you reach Calcutta, you won't be able to leave it for some time.

I want also to start work on the plan we made on the trip from Paris to Deauville about the Hindu volunteer movement.

All these matters require discussion. If you find it impossible to come to Lahore, then I may see you at Delhi, but meet we *must*, before you proceed to Calcutta. I cannot come either to Benares or to Calcutta. I propose to stick to Lahore for October and November, and write a book in reply to Miss Mayo's *Mother India*. I rely upon you to help me in these tangles.

You may see Jayakar and discuss matters with him also. In the meantime I am going to have one of the Bungalows reserved for me and another for Malaviyaji, so that we may be near enough to meet and consult each other more frequently. Please do write to me in full about your plans.

Are you not going to mature your plan for a new Bank? I think this is the time to do it. With love.

Yours sincerely,
LAJPAT RAI

I fear I was receding more and more from the prospects of becoming an 'All-India man' and my letter to him on September 30 in which I tried to pour oil on these troubled waters may not have enhanced my reputation in his eyes. This is what I wrote.

I shall be going to Benares on Sunday. Please do not worry about our Party. I think possibly that after the 'cool heat' of Simla the members of our Party, after coming to the plains, will find themselves in a cooler atmosphere and I am sure before we re-assemble at Delhi we shall find ourselves in a very good position. The greatest advantage of our Party is that it has the best of all the sensible men and therefore I do not anticipate much difficulty.

I read the deliberations of the Unity Conference held at Simla and my personal opinion is that whether other fanatic Hindus agree or not, we must recognise freedom of religion; the slaughter of cows on the one hand, and playing of music or slaughter of pigs on the other. If we want to save cows we must depend on the goodwill of the other religionists. I am sure that we cannot reduce the number of the slaughter of cows by unnecessarily antagonising Mohammedans, although I would not

even mind fighting against them if thereby we could do any good to ourselves.

The Secretary of the Khilafat Committee may have issued a misleading statement as you call it, but I cannot help feeling that we have been most unreasonable in asking for freedom of music while disallowing them freedom in observing their own religious ceremonies. I shall have a discussion with Panditji when I go to Benares and hope to come to see you at Delhi in November or December.

Please let me know if you have framed any detailed scheme for the training of the Scouts, and if you have, please send me a copy of the same.

He wrote back that in principle he was in full agreement about cow-slaughter but that this mutual recognition was not practical politics without active propaganda as 'the Hindu community will not listen to any such proposals.' In the meantime we should fall back on the resolution of the Delhi Unity Conference. He asked for assistance in re-publishing his books *Young India* and *England's Debt to India*. These were originally published in America but had been banned in India. This prohibition had now been withdrawn. Meantime he was writing a reply to Miss Mayo's *Mother India*.

A man of moods, he was subject to fits of intense depression. His next letter, from Lahore on October 27, was full of criticism of Pandit Malaviya:—'I regret having ever joined him in forming this Party.' 'Patel's conduct during the whole of the session has been very perfidious. While he gave one kind of advice to Srinivasa Iyengar, he gave another kind of advice to Malaviyaji.' He now wished that Pandit Malaviya would 'devote himself exclusively to the University affairs which are in a hopeless condition.' He begged me to come to Delhi. 'The fact is that I am very much upset and I want somebody to whom I can open my heart fully and unreservedly.'

His religious scepticism plunged him into the very slough of despond. From Poona on July 12, 1928, he

poured out what he called a 'lava of pessimism'. It fills five large type-written pages, and is one of the most heart-rending documents I have ever read. A few sentences from it will give a key to its tragic content:

I have lost faith in everything—in myself, in God, in Humanity, in life, in the world . . . Everything seems to be ephemeral and the outcome of human vanity. All my life I have fought and struggled against this doctrine. I have thundered from hundreds of platforms that the doctrine which says 'this world is false, unreal and a delusion' is false . . . Life is real, life is earnest—seems to me to be nothing more than the cry of unconscious vanity. What is there in life which is real and which one should take in earnest? . . . How can I believe in a God who is said to be just and benevolent, all-mighty and omniscient, who rules over this absurd world?

Friendship, love of relatives even, had left him. He no longer cared for them nor they for him.

The short and long of it is that I have lost all faith in God or in religion . . . I know the habit of too much analysis, or tearing things into pieces, is bad. It does not lead to pleasantness. Yet I often find myself in a hyper-critical mood. No one comes up to my ideals. I admire Gandhiji, I admire Malaviyaji, but I often myself indulge in bitter criticism of them. Public life, public activities, public engagements are no longer alluring; they do not attract me; they do not please me, yet I find I cannot live without them. Oh ! What am I to do ? I am miserable, I am lonely, I am unhappy, yet I hug my miserableness, my loneliness and my unhappiness. I do want to get rid of this state of mind, but I don't know how.

Such relief as his tortured soul found was always in action. In November he wrote from Lahore. 'I am now quite well and am thinking of taking a pleasure-health trip either by sea or by a motor tour when coming to Calcutta in December next, where I hope to meet you.'

A few months later he died a martyr's death. His contribution to the struggle for national freedom was great and so was his contribution to social reforms. But with

the advent of Gandhism perhaps he found it difficult to adjust himself to the changing conditions. In any case, with all his faults he was undoubtedly a great man, whose contribution to the freedom movement can never be overestimated.

CHAPTER III

OFF TO LONDON

HERE is the programme that Gandhiji laid down for me in a letter dated Monday, 16th March, 1927:—

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

In my opinion the following rules of conduct must be offered to safeguard one's health while staying in Europe :

1. We should not take much diet to which we are not accustomed.

2. They eat six to seven times in Europe, but you must not eat more than three times. Do not get accustomed to taking chocolate and such like things during intervals.

3. They eat even at 1 o'clock at night. But we must not eat anything after 8 o'clock. When visiting people and places, we are expected to take tea, etc. This is entirely wrong.

4. One should go out for a walk every day and cover a distance of at least six miles. One should be accustomed to walk both morning and evening.

5. You should wear only a limited amount of clothing, the secret being that one must not feel cold. Walking ensures against cold.

6. It is not at all necessary to don European dress. One should try to know the poor people of Europe ; for this, walking on foot is necessary. When there is time at your disposal, going on foot is preferable.

7. Do not persuade yourself for a moment that since you have come to Europe you have got to do something. Do only what natural and spontaneous effort can accomplish.

8. It is my view that your sojourn in Europe will result in at least one good thing—you can certainly build up your body.

9. May God save you from mental debauchery; very few Indians escape it. While their way of living is natural to people there, it only helps to intoxicate us.

10. The practice of reading the Gita and the Ramayana must in no case be given up. If you do not practise it already, the sooner you begin it the better.

I am sure you did not look forward to advice in such minute

OFF TO LONDON

detail. This I am giving because I have great faith in the goodness of yourself and your brothers. The number of rich people who possess your goodness and humility is very small indeed. I want manifold increase in it, and I want to put it to use in the service of the nation. I have no faith in the principle of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Therefore, wherever I see purity, truth and non-violence even in the smallest degree, I start collecting the treasure with a care of a miser, and this in itself is my reward inasmuch as it makes me happy.

You can ask for any further advice at Bombay on 23/24, Kolhapur 25/26, Belgaum 27/4 April, Madras 5/12.

Yours sincerely,
MOHANDAS

At this time I was anxious that Gandhiji should visit Europe and make personal contacts. I have no copy of my letter, but he replied as follows:—

27th March, 1927.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

I am in receipt of your letter. I have not yet made up my mind about going to Europe. I do not like to go. I do wish to meet Romain Rolland, but I am waiting for his letter on the subject. I have already received a letter, but it does not help me in making up my mind about going. If at all I decide to go, it will be only in the month of May, and I shall be back in October. Even if I can stay with you at Mussoorie for a few days only, I shall try. I want to stay here till April 13. Please let me know your views on what I have written on the question of boycott of foreign cloth.

Do let me have detailed information about your health. I hope now you are able to take food.

Yours sincerely,
MOHANDAS

His next letter contained more advice about London :—

Nandi Fort, 26th May, 1927.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

Jamnalalji has been here for the last two days. He has given me your message. I need not write anything more than

what I have written. Regarding your presentation to the King I think you should not try for it. If the Secretary of State for India or the Prime Minister desires it, then you should not refuse. So far as I know, politics cannot be discussed with the King. Only formal courtesies are exchanged. But you must meet the ministers and you can talk to them about whatever you like. You must make a very close study of conditions in jails there, and, along with somebody who knows you, you must visit the slum districts of London and observe how the poor live there. On Saturday evenings you should once or twice stand outside the bars in rich and poor districts and watch their life.

My health is improving day by day. I wrote to Malaviyaji many days ago. I do not expect a reply because he is not in the habit of replying to letters. Telegrams to him are without fail answered by telegrams.

I shall write to you again. I hope you are keeping good health.

Yours,
MOHANDAS

A few days later he wrote again in Hindi and discussed his own health as well as that of Pandit Malaviya, and launched into an interesting philosophical disquisition on life and death. I append a translation :—

Nandi Hills, *31st May, 1927.*

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

I have your letter.

As I dictate this, Mahadev reminds me that you have requested me through Jamnalalji to write to you in English. But as I shall not write anything which needs to be shown to others, I continue to dictate this letter in Hindi.

I have received your letter written from the steamer. I have already written to you two letters before this at your Geneva address. I hope you have received them by now. My health is improving. I have kept writing to Malaviyaji. Just as I predicted I received his long telegram this week. Therein he informs me that though his health is good he is weak. At present he is at Bombay. To say about me that I do not take proper care of my health is, I think, not correct. I do take as much care of my health as I deem necessary for its preservation.

Malaviyaji does not do so. I often wrote this to him, but even after making a promise to take a rest, he did not keep it. He has great faith in Ayurvedic treatment and believes that he keeps, and can keep, well by taking pills and powders from *vaidyas*, and his self-confidence is so great that despite his weakness and illness, he is resolved to live up to 75. May God make his resolution good. Who can press him too much? I have written to him in as strong language as possible couched with humour and consistently with courtesy. The truth is that a man's reason follows his activities. There is little free scope for human efforts in such matters. One's duty is to strive and one must perform it; but for one and all a time comes when all efforts become futile and, fortunately and in the interest of conservation of human efforts, God has not given anyone the knowledge of the last moment. Then why should we worry for this inevitable thing? The affairs of the country depend upon neither Malaviyaji, nor Lalaji [*i.e.* Lala Lajpat Rai], nor me. All are mere instruments and, as for myself, I believe that a good man's work really begins after his death. Shakespeare is not right in saying:

The evil that men do lives after them ;

The good is oft interred with their bones.

Evil is never so long-lived. Rama is alive and we purify ourselves by repeating his name. Ravana is gone, and gone as also with him are his evils. Even a wicked man does not remember Ravana. No one knows the real Rama of his age. The poet has told us that in his own age he, too, was subjected to accusations. But all the imperfections of Rama were burnt with his body and we to-day worship him only as a divine being; and certainly the extent of Ramrajya was not so great when he was physically alive as it is now.

I do not write this as a highly philosophical statement, or for pacificatory consolation. But I want to say emphatically that we should not at all grieve over the death of one whom we consider a saintly man; also that we should have a firm faith that it is only after his death that his true work commences, or rather begins to bear fruit. What were considered to be his great achievements during his lifetime would pale into insignificance before the future ones. Of course, it is our duty to follow, up to the extent of our capacity, the good steps of those whom we respect as saints.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE MAHATMA

I have to make a suggestion for your health. If you have no faith, as indeed you should not, in allopathy, you may go and see the institutions of Louis Kuhne and Just in Germany. The treatment of patients there consists of open air and water, and hundreds of people have availed themselves of those institutions. You may also contact the two vegetarian societies at London and Manchester respectively. In these societies there are always some sober, courteous and balanced people; but you will also come across some stupid and vain persons.

Yours,
MOHANDAS

The next letter was written in English little more than a week later:

‘Kumara Park’,
Bangalore, *9th June, 1927.*

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

This is the fourth letter I am writing to you after your departure from Bombay. Jamnalalji has sent me your cablegram. Hence this letter in English. I must not yet try to write letters myself. In order to conserve my energy, therefore, I am dictating most of my correspondence, whether in English, Hindi or Gujrati.

Malaviyaji is with me to-day. He is on his way to Ooty to recoup himself. He came this morning and was to have left this evening; but on my telling him that the day after tomorrow is the Mysore Maharaja's birthday and suggesting that he should go to Mysore to give his blessings before proceeding to Ooty, he has sent a telegram to the Dewan. He has suspended his journey forward and will probably leave for Mysore tomorrow. Of course, I have been in regular correspondence with him and he has been replying by wires. He is looking much pulled down, but he is as hopeful as ever about everything. There is nothing wrong with his body. It is simply weakness caused by ceaseless wear and tear. He promises to take about a month's rest in Ooty. He has Dr. Mangal Singh with him, and, of course, a cook. Govind was with him as far as Bombay but has been obliged to go to Allahabad as he could not get a postponement of his 'crow case'.

I wonder if I suggested to you that you should see Miss Muriel Lester who is working in the slums of London. She was

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in India for some time last year. She was at the Ashram for one month. She is a most enthusiastic and able worker. She is working in the cause of total prohibition and is trying to cultivate public opinion there. Her address is :—Miss Muriel Lester, Kingsley Hall, Powis Road, Bow, E. 3.

I hope that your health has improved and likewise Lalaji's. I descended from Nandi last Sunday. I am making fair progress. Doctors here are of opinion that I will be able to resume a moderate amount of touring next month.

Yours,
MOHANDAS

After my return to India later in the year, our correspondence continued to discuss the many problems of the day, yet Bapu's letters often contained those personal touches which so much endeared him to others.

1-10-27.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

Your letter.

I gather from Jamnalalji's letter that you have returned from Europe in bad health. I think it is now necessary for you to take a rest and improve your health. I can certainly be of some help to you in the selection of items for your diet. But for this you will have to spend some time with me.

You have done well in sending me your opinion on different subjects.

It is not true that non-co-operation is responsible for the division of public opinion into two distinct camps. There have always been two camps, and what has just taken place is only a difference in form. I still believe that non-co-operation alone can add to our strength. People have begun to appreciate its power; only they still lack the requisite strength to act on it. The Hindu-Muslim question is proving another obstacle in the way. I can do nothing to help the councils. But the members can certainly be of help in the matter of Khadi and Prohibition, if they choose to do so. The Khadi work is going on both slowly and rapidly at the same time. Slowly inasmuch as we cannot foresee the result; rapidly, because whatever is being done

IN THE SHADOW OF THE MAHATMA

is clear enough. Since it has been free from blemish, a salutary result is a foregone conclusion.

My thirst for money is simply unquenchable. I need at least Rs. 2,00,000/- for Khadi, Untouchability and Education. The dairy work makes another Rs. 50,000/-. Then there is the Ashram expenditure. No work remains unfinished for want of funds, but God gives after severe trials. This also satisfies me. You can give me as much as you like for whatever work you have faith in.

My tour programme extends right to the end of this year at least. I hope to reach the Ashram in the month of January.

I have written a letter to respected Malaviyaji on the Hindu-Muslim question. Something must be done in this direction on proper lines. What is happening just now appears to me to be lacking in the essentials of religion.

Yours sincerely,
MOHANDAS

Birla House, Benares
11-10-27.

My dear Mahatmaji,

I am thinking of resting here for about twenty days and have already started taking medicine prescribed by a Vaidya Tryambak Shastriji, in whom I have great faith. I wish I could meet some naturopath under whose treatment I could place myself with certainty of as good results as I get by placing myself under the care of *vaidyas*.

Respected Malaviyaji is not here. I hope to be able to give between Rs. 50,000/- and Rs. 1,00,000/- for the next year.

* * *

Whenever you find any particular kind of work impeded for lack of funds, you have only to write to me. Even as it is, I shall be sending money. I can give more, but for the present I have interested myself in several schemes which I consider good for the country. That is the reason for this comparative economy.

Yours sincerely,
GHANSHYAMDAS

OFF TO LONDON

Betia, P.O. Kr. 6,
Monday, 14-12-27.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

I am in receipt of your letter. The amount of Rs. 8,000/- sent to Jamnalalji is being treated by me as meant for the Spinners' Association.

I have been doing some serious and deep thinking on the subject of conversion. The methods adopted in conversion can hardly be treated as sanctioned by religion. It is unnecessary to convert those who changed their religion through compulsion or out of ignorance. Such people are, in fact, Hindus—the only thing that remains to be done is for Hinduism to be more catholic in its outlook. Our movement should be directed against conversion to Christianity or Islam. That requires a fundamental change in our outlook. Once we accept that certain methods employed in conversion are blameworthy, we should not follow them ourselves. The proper course to meet this form of attack would be to find out and employ some righteous remedy. By furthering the *shuddhi* movement we only add to the filth and at the same time prevent the spontaneous urge for reform among the followers of Hinduism. I find complete absence of thoughtfulness in the present agitation. When your mind is more steady you can think over this matter coolly. I would certainly not like any work to be suspended merely because I say so. That would be of no use to us. Only when what I say is found to be right independently on its own merits, should it be acted upon, and only to the extent to which it is found to be right. That is why I have been maintaining the present calm and silence. When you are free from engagements connected with the Assembly, I would like you to accompany me on my tour for a few days.

I shall be in Calcutta on February 1, on my way to Gandia.

Yours sincerely,
MOHANDAS

Birla House, Pilani,
10th January, 1928.

My dear Mahadev Bhai,

Jamnalalji has asked me how the recent donation of Rs. 78,000/- is to be spent. I leave the matter entirely to the discretion of Mahatmaji. If he is not hard pressed for money,

IN THE SHADOW OF THE MAHATMA

I would suggest that preference be given to such schemes as may bring Swaraj nearer. Hindu-Muslim unity and uplift of Untouchables are the two items which I think are at present very essential in the interest of Swaraj.

Yours sincerely,
GHANSHYAMDAS

Ashram, 7-2-28.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

Your letter makes me anxious. On the contrary, medicines should cause tiredness. In my view fasting is the best of all medicines. I have nothing to fear from it. Fasting can do no harm, and should be undertaken not for one or two days but for ten to fifteen days. If you want to take a course of fasting you should stay here. There are one or two gentlemen acquainted with the technique of fasting. These can be called, and there is plenty of accommodation. Nowadays the weather here is pleasant. In case you wish to invite the specialists in fasting to Pilani that also can be arranged.

I am quite convinced that you should not go to Delhi at present. I am also writing to respected Malaviyaji and Lalaji to the same effect. I would refer you to my appeal published in the *Young India* and the *Navjivan* regarding a memorial for Hakim Ajmal Khan, and should like to have money from you and your friends. If you are not inclined to contribute a large amount, I would like to take a substantial portion of the Rs. 75,000/- for this purpose, of course with your consent. I leave it to you to make your name public in this connection. But if you do not feel like giving anything out of that amount, please do let me know without hesitation.

You need not alarm yourself by reading newspaper accounts of my health. There is nothing to worry about. The doctors do their best to terrify me but I remain unmoved.

Yours sincerely,
MOHANDAS

2-7-28.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

Your letter and draft for Rs. 2,700/-. I do not maintain contact with China, but I do not feel like sending a telegram to those people as it smacks of pride. Granted life, I certainly

OFF TO LONDON

intend to go to China once. They want to invite me to China after things quieten down there to some extent.

I always hesitate to approach you and your brothers for funds because whatever I ask of you I get. I note what you say about Dakshinamurti. The position is that while there are so many good things to do, there are not many donors. Not that a good work is left unfinished, but the fact remains that no new donors come forward to help. On the other hand good things awaiting our attention are ever on the increase.

You are quite right when you say that the value of rules and regulations depends on those who observe them.

The money has been sent to the Austrian friends.

Yours sincerely,
MOHANDAS

14-1-29.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

Your telegram had reached me. Now I have your letter. I am proceeding to Sind by the end of this month in connection with the Lajpatrai Memorial Fund. Have you collected something in Calcutta?

As for the milk centre, I had suggested the name of a Madrasi. A letter was written to him. If that name does not sound well I can give another. As for Khadi Bhandar, it will not do to ignore the ideal. The Bhandar should not be conducted on purely business lines; the motive of services is to be kept in mind.

I am well. At present my menu consists of 15 tolas almond milk, 14 tolas roti, vegetables, raw tomato, 4 tolas linseed oil, and 2 tolas flour gruel in the morning. I have discontinued taking fruit here. I have gained $1\frac{1}{2}$ 'ratals' in weight in a single week. Feeling quite fit.

Yours sincerely,
MOHANDAS

Bareilly, 13-6-29.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

Harbhai is a colleague of Nanabhai in Dakshinamurti Bhawan. Nanabhai has fallen ill at Wardha. We have already had a talk about this Vidyalaya, and now I am sending Harbhai to you. You alone were to decide as to what help should be

given to this institution. I have given Nanabhai my word of assurance, which is based on a donation from you. You will now hear everything from Harbhai himself. Look into the accounts of the institution, and do whatever you think proper.

Yours sincerely,

MOHANDAS

Towards the end of the year 1929, the question arose of his going to the first Round Table Conference in London. The object of convening this conference was to remove the disagreeable impression created in India by the appointment of the Simon Commission, which consisted solely of British members of the Lords and Commons, and to enable Indians to take part in the drafting of the Government of India Bill, for which the Simon Commission had been created to pave the way. I tried to get Gandhiji to attend on behalf of India, but he was then on the eve of launching his second Civil Disobedience campaign and deeply preoccupied by it. I wrote to him as follows:—

Pilani, 11-11-29.

Revered Mahatmaji,

I am here and shall return after about a week. You might have seen the Lords' and the Commons' debates. In my opinion the speech delivered by Benn* was quite good, bearing in mind the present circumstances. Provided we are prepared to give him credit for mental honesty. I feel it was not possible for him to say more than what he actually did. He himself has declared that there has been a change in the spirit. In spite of Lloyd George's persistent questioning, he declined to say more and thereby indirectly corroborated our own declarations, according to the Sanskrit adage 'Silence means Consent'. The fact that he did not contradict our leader's statements is a happy augury, indeed. My own impression is that both the Viceroy† as well as Wedgwood Benn want to help, but that we shall not have anything approaching complete Dominion Status. I firmly believe that if you do

* Mr. Wedgwood Benn, Secretary of State for India.

† Lord Irwin, now Lord Halifax.

go there, it will be all to our own advantage inasmuch as they will think many times before allowing you to return dissatisfied. They might yield everything except Defence. But in case you do not go, the situation might take an ugly turn. It is this anxiety that has led me to write this to you, and I take the liberty of suggesting that you should take charge of the situation—consistent with honour, of course. I know very well that nothing would make you happier than this; still I thought it proper to write. I have never counselled you on political matters, but under the present circumstances I have felt it necessary. You are aware of the country's weakness as well as its strength, much more than I am. But at times I feel despondent and on such occasions I am inclined to think that if we at all desire to derive any benefit from your sacrifices and not from any strength that we might possess, then now is the time to get busy about it. If they offer Dominion Status you would accept it at once, I know. But I do not think they will do anything of the kind. At present we can hope to get, with your co-operation of course, everything except Defence. I was afraid you might not be inclined to accept that much and might decline to participate in the Round Table Conference; that is why I have written this letter. After you left I met the Viceroy at dinner and gathered the following in the course of conversation :

1. He will be reluctant to release the prisoners, but will ultimately agree to do so.
2. The Conference will be organised in consultation with you and other leaders.
3. The Conference will start by July next, probably.
4. It is difficult to concede complete Dominion Status. But this last they will leave to the Conference.

They neither want to say that complete Dominion Status would take time, nor that it would be conceded soon. My own impression is that for the present we will not be getting full Dominion Status. Still we can achieve a great deal just now, leaving the rest to be realised in the course of the next 5-10 years. Placed as we are, how can we aspire for more just now? The sum and substance of all this is that it would be decidedly to our advantage for you to meet the British Cabinet. Let us not miss this opportunity. Even if the Conference fails in its purpose, we shall stand to gain inasmuch as the left-wingers will come to the

fore. Both ways we stand to gain. This at least is what I believe. You are, however, the best judge.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

I did not succeed in persuading Gandhiji to attend the first conference. On the contrary, he expected to be sent to prison. We met at Wardha and he made it clear to me that his distrust of the British was acute and he urged that Indian members should have nothing more to do with the Legislative Assembly. On 28th February 1930 he wrote: 'They [the British] are only taking advantage of our ignorance and cowardice. The sooner the Assembly is bidden good-bye the better. I have little hope of remaining out of jail till March next.'

The Swaraj Party on this occasion took his advice and walked out of the Assembly. I was not convinced of the wisdom of this, as the Assembly was providing a useful experience for Indians in the working of parliamentary institutions; the Swaraj Party fully realised this and they stood again at the next elections and returned to the Assembly. In the following year, Gandhiji yielded to the arguments of the Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, and the prayers of personal friends such as Pandit Malaviya and myself. He agreed to attend the second Round Table Conference, for which the Congress nominated him as its sole representative. As I was not a member of Congress I accepted a Government invitation to participate, representing the business community. So much has been written of the details of Gandhiji's visit to England, that I need not attempt to record it here. His relations with Lord Halifax were always those of increasing confidence after they had met in India during Lord Halifax's viceroyalty and hammered out the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. But the scene had changed from that of the first conference in the previous year. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald was still Prime Minister and presided, but he was no longer the Head of a Labour Government but of a

Coalition, of which Mr. Baldwin and his Conservative followers formed a predominant part. A Conservative, Sir Samuel Hoare (Lord Templewood), had replaced Mr. Wedgwood Benn as Secretary of State for India. Consequently, I was inclined to share Gandhiji's suspicions, as the following letter will show:—

London, *31st October, 1931.*

My dear Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru,

Mr. Jayakar and yourself must have thought it very stupid of me when in spite of your opinion to the contrary, I was putting my own interpretation on Clauses 18, 19 and 20 of the Federal Structure Committee Report, but my main intention was to point out the fears which I entertained, and if I was too much obsessed with such fears I think it is pardonable because there is ample justification for these, if we look into the past. If my interpretation is wrong, well and good. But in any case I think this letter of mine can only help you to guard against any encroachment in a subtle manner by vested interests on the financial control which you think we have been promised and which we much desire; we must have it without any qualification.

Now according to my feeling the Control of the Finance Department should be judged by our control of the actual amount of finance. Supposing we were given cent per cent control minus 99 per cent reservation, I, as a businessman, would simply say that our control was only 1 per cent. Whereas if we were given control to the extent of cent per cent minus 50 per cent reservation, I would say that our control amounted to 50 per cent. Let us see on this basis how much control we are getting in the Finance Department.

If you read the first portion of Clause 19, it appears that we have been given cent per cent control, subject to certain limitations. Now let us see what these limitations are. In my opinion the following limitations have been laid down in Clauses 18, 19 and 20 :

- (1) Establishment of Reserve Bank.
- (2) Previous sanction of the Governor-General for Amending Paper Currency or Coinage Acts.
- (3) Establishment of Statutory Railway Board.

- (4) Constitution of Consolidated Fund Charge for securing finance for
 - (a) Debt Service.
 - (b) Sinking Fund for Debt Service.
 - (c) Salaries and Pensions.
 - (d) Military.
- (5) Power to the Governor-General of intervening in regard to budgetary arrangements and borrowings, when he thought that methods were being pursued which would in his opinion seriously prejudice the credit of India.

In my opinion these powers cover more or less cent per cent of the field of finance, and I contend therefore that under these clauses we get no responsibility. Let me give you a brief sketch of the Finance Department and you will be able to judge whether I am right or not. Including the Railway Budget, the total revenue and expenditure of the Finance Department amount to about 130 crores. The Finance Department, besides this, also manage Indian Currency and Exchange. Now, I assume—and if I act with distrust I must put the worst interpretation on the clauses—that the Reserve Bank will not be a thing of our creation and that the Assembly will have more or less no authority over it. I myself do not desire any political influence on the Reserve Bank in its day-to-day affairs, but the Legislature must be the final authority about deciding the policy of the Reserve Bank, and I think powers have been taken away from us by the provision of our having to take previous sanction from the Governor-General for purposes of amending the Paper Currency Act. By constituting a Statutory Railway Board, which again I assume will not be our own creation nor under our control, 40 crores is proposed to be taken away from us, so that we shall be left with 90 crores. The Army requires 45 crores, Debt Services 15 crores, Pensions and other charges 15 crores. Thus 75 crores are constituted into a Consolidated Fund which will have first charge on our revenue. This leaves only 15 crores for us out of 130 crores. Anyone who has got a first charge to the extent of 115 crores on a total of 130 crores would naturally like to interfere at every step in our budgetary arrangements, and also our borrowing arrangements, and it is for this reason that the Governor-General has been given power to intervene. Fluctuation of 5 or 10 crores in the budget with a freaky Indian monsoon is inevitable, and therefore there

will always be a danger of the Governor-General pouncing on the Finance Member at every step. The Finance Member will therefore be compelled to be a mere tool in the hands of the Governor-General. In my opinion, therefore, there is no control given under these three clauses to the popular minister. I maintain that they do not confine themselves to the Reserve Bank as you are interpreting, but that they cover the entire field of finance.

You may ask me, what then is the alternative? I said yesterday that these clauses were only the natural consequence of the constitution of the Consolidated Fund Charge. There are two alternatives. Either the Consolidated Fund Charge should be much smaller than what is proposed, or the Governor-General should have no power to intervene unless we default. I think we should insist on both. The Consolidated Fund Charge could be made smaller only by reserving a much smaller sum for the Army, and asking for relief in regard to our Debt Service. Benthall told me that it may be possible to ask for such relief. He said that instead of insisting, as the Congress does, on cancellation of some debts, we may ask Great Britain to capitalize these. In any case we ought to fight for substantial relief, if we are to find money for popular services in India. If military charges were reduced to 35 crores and Debt Service and other charges, after receiving relief from Great Britain, were reduced to 20 crores, then the total Consolidated Fund would not exceed 55 crores. If the Reserve Bank and the Statutory Railway Board were to be a creation entirely of our own with full control by the Legislature so far as the general policy is concerned, then I think it would leave a good latitude to the Finance Member. It may then be very properly suggested that after all the Governor-General had a first charge only on 55 crores out of a total revenue of 130 crores, therefore, he should have no power to intervene in budgetary and internal borrowing arrangements.

I think I have fully explained my point. I have not the least doubt in my mind that my fears are entirely well founded. The interpretation which I have put is in my opinion the only interpretation which could be put on these three clauses. Englishmen, in my opinion, could not put any different interpretation but if you still believe that these clauses confine themselves to the establishment of a Reserve Bank, then I would suggest that you should get the points cleared up by having them differently worded. It

is because I put a different interpretation that I said that the proposed Financial Council could not be a substitute for these three clauses. The proposed Financial Council would be a very innocuous thing if it were of our own creation, whereas these three clauses give very wide powers to the Governor-General over the entire field of our finance. In fact the so-called control of finance is reduced to a nullity.

I hope you will give your careful consideration to my note.

Yours sincerely,

G. D. BIRLA.

PS.—I have written at some length in order to bring home to you my appreciation that if the formula is accepted as discussed by us yesterday, on the basis of paragraph 18, it is bound to involve continual interference from the Governor-General in the budgetary arrangements unless and until substantial reductions are assured in Military expenditure and in the Debt charges. If these two items are reduced as indicated above, the British Government and Commercial interests will not be justified in asking for the intervention of the Governor-General in budgetary arrangements, and I put this PS. to indicate to you in a few words the net result of what I have said above.

Sir Tej had been the equivalent in those days of a Cabinet Minister in India and had represented his country at an Imperial Conference, so he was better acquainted with the peculiar ways of the British than I was at that time. I knew that an Englishman's word was supposed to be his bond, and therefore as a businessman I scrutinised the words and expected the British to exact their pound of flesh. But such is the traditional make-believe of the British Constitution that in high governmental matters the British adopt the very opposite of their attitude in business matters and say one thing when they mean another. This arose in the process of limiting the monarchy as painlessly as possible, and is continued in the evolutionary process of limiting the authority of the British Parliament and people over colonies and dependencies till they achieve independence. Judge, therefore my surprise when Sir

Tej and his close adherent Mr. Jayakar were not only unconvinced by my letter but continued to disagree with my argument. This prompted me to write the following letter:—

London, *2nd December*, 1931.

Dear Dr. Jayakar,

During our discussion at King Street yesterday you expressed your disapproval of my speech at the Round Table Conference. As I value your opinion I was extremely sorry that you should have disagreed with my views, but I may say that I did not spring any surprise upon you. I sent you a copy of my letter which I wrote to Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, on the 31st October, and since then neither you nor Sir Tej ever discussed the matter with me to convince me that I was wrong, and the only inference that I therefore drew was that you were probably satisfied with the interpretation which I had put on clauses 14, 18 and 21. In fact you did not even acknowledge receipt of my letter. What disappointed me, however, was that in the Federal Structure Committee, Sir Tej, far from removing the apprehension entertained by me, went further and after confirming the paragraphs 14, 18 and 21 as they originally stood, more or less supported Sir Samuel Hoare's statement on the safeguards. The last report of the Federal Structure Committee on financial safeguards is in a way a paraphrase of the statement made by Sir Samuel Hoare. Sir Purshottamdas tried to point out the defects in the Federal Structure Committee, but unfortunately he failed to get any support from your side.

The latest position thus amounts to this, that safeguards as formulated in paragraphs 14, 18 and 21 are confirmed, and it is further suggested that it is premature at this stage to define them in greater detail. In my opinion this should leave no doubt as to what is meant by safeguards. Their implications are now perfectly clear to me and they simply confirm my views, which I put at length in my letter to Sir Tej on the 31st October.

I very much regret that when Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas raised the question of a Statutory Railway Board in the Federal Structure Committee, he had a similar experience. Even on the question of discrimination in administrative action Sir Tej Bahadur supported the idea of the question being decided by the Supreme Court. Here again Sir Purshottamdas fared no better.

In my opinion this is a very dangerous principle which it is proposed to establish. It is really unfortunate that we could not carry your and Sir Tej's support even on matters in which legitimately we can claim to be heard. However, that is beside the point.

I do not agree with you that the question of revising paragraphs 14, 18 and 21 is still left open for discussion. It pains me however to see that they were not revised here when we had an opportunity to do so. I wonder, however, how you can interpret the Premier's speech as providing for the re-opening of the whole question, as you said to Mahatmaji yesterday. The future structure can only be built on the basis of the reports which you have presented and to which you are all committed, and which, in my opinion, do not give a vestige of control as far as the Finance Department is concerned, to say nothing of army and external affairs.

The Working Committee of the Round Table Conference certainly cannot undo what has already been done or settled. It can only pursue further matters already decided upon, but as yet neither its terms of reference nor the scope of its work has been defined.

I assure you that I am open to conviction, and I would be much relieved to feel that I am wrong, but I must submit that you have not helped the course by committing yourselves to certain conclusions, at least without showing us that our apprehensions are ill-founded. However, this is just to explain my personal views. Let me again hope that you are right.

As one of your colleagues in the old National Party in the Assembly, is it too much for me yet to suggest to you that you make your wishes clear that you are not committed to the financial safeguards which the majority of the Conference has passed, and that you will ask for the re-opening of this and other points which I have mentioned above? I sincerely trust that you may still be able to do this.

Yours sincerely,
G. D. BIRLA

When the *Government of India Act* came into force in 1937, the Governor-General and the Governors made no attempt to interfere with Congress Premiers or Governments in the Provinces of India. And when

Gandhiji had finally convinced the British Government that India was a nation, they gracefully eliminated themselves. Of our own volition we retain the Reserve Bank and the Railway Board and even choose to remain in the Commonwealth though we are a Republic. All of which shows the importance of understanding one another's ways. Britain did not try to understand in the earlier stages. But the end of the mutual understanding was undoubtedly glorious.

CHAPTER IV

CONSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS

I WENT so far as to urge the setting up of a special committee to consider the financial safeguards. The conference broke up and I returned to India, where I received a letter from Sir Samuel turning down my suggestion and inviting me instead to join a different committee:—

Personal.

India Office,
Whitehall, 27th January, 1932.

Dear Mr. Birla,

I promised to let you know what I thought of your suggestion that the question of financial safeguards might be referred to a special committee which would include members with financial qualifications who are not members of the Round Table Conference Consultative Committee. On the whole I have come to the conclusion that it would be a mistake now that we have set up the Consultative Committee which is to act in pursuance of the general policy indicated at the Round Table Conference, if we were to graft on to it a system of sub-committees with members drawn from outside. I feel that such a system might lead to wide and embarrassing ramifications. I understand that Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas finds himself unable to join the Consultative Committee. It is open to you to ask for a seat on the Committee, and if you were to do so I have little doubt that you would be nominated as a member.

Yours sincerely,
SAMUEL HOARE

As Gandhiji had by this time resumed the Civil Disobedience campaign, and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industries, of which I was the ex-President, were not associating themselves with the Round Table Conference, in thanking Sir Samuel for his kind offer I wrote from New Delhi on the 14th February 1932:—

CONSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS

Dear Sir Samuel,

It is very kind of you to suggest that in case I care to join the Committee I would be nominated. I, however, do not think that that would be a correct attitude on my part. In such a case I would prove my disloyalty to the Federation and my unworthiness to serve any good cause. The best service I can render to my own country as well as to the cause of co-operation is to persuade the Federation to officially offer its co-operation. I know Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas also holds the same opinion as myself with reference to our participation in the work of the working committee. Besides, as a representative of the Indian Mercantile community, in many respects he is better. He is more tactful, has greater experience, and more ability. If we can both persuade the Federation to modify its attitude I have not the least doubt that he is the fittest man to represent the Indian Mercantile community.

I hope to write to you again after the meeting of the Federation which is being invited to rediscuss this very question.

I came to Delhi to discuss this problem with important members of the Federation and am leaving tomorrow for Calcutta. I shall discuss there with Mr. Benthall and others the question of closer co-operation between the two communities interested in trade and commerce.

Yours sincerely,

G. D. BIRLA

In his next letter Sir Samuel raised the new and burning question of the coming Ottawa Conference on Empire preference:—

India Office,

Whitehall, *25th February, 1932.*

Dear Mr. Birla,

Many thanks for your letter of the 14th February. I am very glad indeed to hear that you and Sir Purshottamdas are trying to persuade the Federation to modify its attitude in regard to co-operation with the constitutional discussions and I wish you well in this work. I shall be interested to hear from you again when the meeting of the Federation has been held. I am glad also to hear that you are having discussions with Mr. Benthall and others with a view to closer co-operation between the two communities in the matter of trade and commerce.

There is another very important question to which I would suggest that you and Sir Purshottamdas and your friends should turn your minds. That is the question of the Ottawa Conference which, as you know, is going to be held in the summer. I am aware of course of the past history of the question of inter-Imperial tariff relations so far as India is concerned, but I hope you will realise that the new policy of His Majesty's Government puts this question on a new and different footing, a footing on which sentiment and politics ought to be of much less importance than considerations of economic interest. I shall be much disappointed if India is not represented at Ottawa in a spirit which will enable negotiations to take place with a view to the voluntary and mutual benefit of the trade and commerce of both countries.

Yours sincerely,
SAMUEL HOARE

I consulted the Committee of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and replied as follows:—

Birla House,
New Delhi, 14th March, 1932.

Dear Sir Samuel,

Thanks for your letter of 25th February.

We have had a meeting of our Committee and I enclose herewith a copy of the resolution passed.* As you will see from this, for immediate results the resolution does not carry us much further but it definitely commits us to a policy of co-operation and, as such, is a great improvement on the previous resolution. In the *first* part of it, we ask the Government to change its present policy of repression; in the *second*, we repudiate the interpretation put on our previous resolution by Sir George Rainey; and in the *third* part, we definitely offer our co-operation to the committee which we propose should be appointed to examine and come to an agreed solution on all financial matters. We had a full discussion on the matter and it was made clear at the meeting that if the Government decided to adopt our suggestion and appointed a Committee as requested by us, the Federation would be prepared to participate not only in the new committee but also in the Consultative Committee.

* See Appendix.

CONSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS

It was not possible to go beyond this. The opinions received from the member-bodies were overwhelmingly in favour of non-participation, but the Committee took upon itself the responsibility of giving the lead and decided, against the views of the various constituencies, to offer its co-operation, though conditionally. The annual session will be held on the 26th and 27th March when this resolution will have to be confirmed. Confirmation of this is essential as we have acted against the general opinion of our constituencies. The Committee, however, unanimously decided to stake their existence on this resolution, and if it is not passed they have decided to resign in a body. In a way, they have shown great courage and I hope that the resolution in its present form will be passed. In that event I think I should press upon you my original suggestion which has now been adopted by the Federation in the form of the present resolution.

Since writing to you last I have had a talk with Lord Lothian and Sir George Schuster and I explained to them how it would be a waste of time for us to discuss financial safeguards with those who did not understand the subject. I impressed upon them that the best method of arriving at a practical solution on these matters was that experienced businessmen of both sides should sit at a table and come to an agreed solution. Both Lord Lothian and Sir George Schuster very much liked my suggestion and promised to write to you. I hope they have done so. I will see Schuster in a day or two and am also seeing the Viceroy on the 17th, but I would earnestly ask you to reconsider your attitude. If you can appoint a Committee—it may be under the auspices of the Consultative Committee—consisting of men like Lord Reading and Sir Basil Blackett and an equal number from our side to sit in London and discuss the whole financial field, I am sure much good can come out of it.

It may not be possible at present to have an agreement between a radical India and a most conservative Parliament, but I submit that it is possible to have an agreement between the present Parliament and progressive Indian opinion. And it is in this direction that I seek your help and guidance. I wish you to realise that if a constitution is introduced without the consent even of progressive people, to say nothing of the Congress Party, its smooth working cannot be guaranteed. On the other hand, if you can give us a constitution to the liking of the progressive

people it can have even Gandhiji's blessings. I always make a distinction between Gandhiji and the Congress, and I again submit that it is possible for you to give us a constitution, which, though not acceptable to the Congress, may not be rejected by Gandhiji, and which can ensure a smooth working in future. If the next day after the introduction of a constitution a movement to wreck it is started, then peace becomes impossible; and what I want is a permanent peace between the two countries. I will, therefore, ask you to seriously consider the resolution which we have passed and see whether it is not possible for you to utilise this opportunity for bringing progressive opinion closer to you. I ask you to give us a chance to work for peace, and I, therefore, implore you to reconsider our suggestion.

As regards closer co-operation between the two communities, I regret to have to say that I have not been given much encouragement by Mr. Benthall. In London we acted in the friendliest spirit, each trying to see and appreciate the point of view of the other, and I expected that this spirit would continue in India. But he seems to be a changed man just now and the report of a speech which he recently made in Calcutta (a copy of which I enclose herewith) has simply amazed me. That after our friendliest co-operation in London he should call us 'irreconcilables' and try to ridicule Gandhiji is a thing which is beyond my comprehension. The report, in my opinion, does not do credit even to himself. This has had a very bad effect on the minds of the Indian Mercantile-community. Yet so far as we are concerned, we do not want to give a wrong lead to our constituencies and therefore my efforts in the right direction will continue.

But to do constructive work one requires an atmosphere of trust and friendship and this at present is unfortunately lacking in India. Your letters to me, in fact, are a relieving feature of the present unhappy situation. Evidently you are of a trustful nature and this increases my responsibility. I should, therefore, like you to know me as I really am. I need hardly say that I am a great admirer of Gandhiji. In fact, if I may say so, I am one of his pet children. I have liberally financed his Khaddar-producing and untouchability activities. I have never taken any part in the Civil Disobedience movement. But I have been a very severe critic of the Government and so have never been popular with them. Even to-day I do not see eye to eye with the

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policy of the Government. I wish I could convert the authorities to the view that Gandhiji and men of his type are not only friends of India but also friends of Great Britain, and that Gandhiji is the greatest force on the side of peace and order. He alone is responsible for keeping the left wing in India in check. To strengthen his hands is, in my opinion, therefore, to strengthen the bond of friendship between the two countries. But I am afraid in the present atmosphere it is an uphill task to truly explain Gandhiji. Probably the best way to success in this mission is to give you our co-operation as far as possible. And with such 'disqualifications' as I possess, if you think I can be of any use in bringing about happy relations between the two countries you can always rely on my humble services.

With reference to the Ottawa Conference, if it is your desire that Indian trade and commerce should be represented at the Conference, as I interpret your letter to mean, Sir Purshottamdas would be delighted to accept the invitation when it is extended to him. I am writing this with his full consent. The Committee of the Federation will not be averse to this proposition. We realise the importance of this Conference and you may rely on our support in the right direction.

May I, however, in this connection, give you another suggestion? Whatever is decided at Ottawa should not be ratified by the Indian Assembly until the new Constitution comes into operation and, in my humble opinion, the agreement which may be arrived at should not be made effective without ratification by the new Government. We are all in favour of reciprocal arrangement on economic grounds. Of course the arrangement will have to be such as should also find favour with public opinion, but it is not difficult to devise such a plan.

I very much appreciate that you do not ignore past history, and so far as we are concerned, you will find us always ready to work for the economic interest, leaving aside sentiment and politics.

I will be here for a fortnight and then go back to Calcutta.

Yours sincerely,

G. D. BIRLA

Later there was a slight modification in the third paragraph of the resolution and I wrote again:—

Birla House,
New Delhi, 28th March, 1932.

Dear Sir Samuel,

The annual session of the Federation concluded yesterday and after a very heated discussion we passed the resolution, a copy of which I am enclosing herewith. As you will see from this, there has been a change made in the language of the third paragraph of the original resolution, but in substance it is the same. In some respects this resolution is better than the one passed by the Committee because it is not vague and definitely offers co-operation under certain conditions.

I have nothing more to add to my last letter. I feel satisfied that I have been able to persuade the Federation to adopt the view which I put forward during my conversation with you in London. In view of this, if at any time you think we could serve the cause of peace and progress in India we would be delighted to offer our help. I would ask you to take a longer view. I say this because the official group in India is working with a day-to-day policy and depending for light on factors uncertain and unknown. This is not a policy of statesmen. I do not want to make any further comment on this aspect of the Indian situation, but I very much wish that the Government tried to achieve permanent peace—not something patched up—between the two countries. To my mind that achievement is possible even with the present Conservative Parliament.

Please excuse me for encroaching upon your time every now and then.

Yours sincerely,
G. D. BIRLA

Sir Samuel Hoare replied on the 8th of April to say that he was carefully thinking over important points that I had raised and that he would write later.

My diary records that:

I met the Governor of Bengal [Sir John Anderson, now Lord Waverley] at 10-30 a.m. on the 10th April, 1932. He seemed to be a very shrewd and intelligent man. He speaks very little, and seems to understand economic questions very well. I started the discussion on the weather and asked if he was not feeling uncomfortable owing to the heat. We immediately came

to close grips on more important subjects. I expressed the hope that his visit to Simla would bring better results. He enquired if I meant better results in economic spheres. I said I did not expect any improvement in economic spheres. I was referring to politics. Economic improvement was impossible. The world was suffering from a bad monetary system and until the system was changed it could not improve except by natural adjustment which should take a pretty long time, and may even cause a serious upheaval in the construction of society. He agreed with me that stability of prices was better, but who could be entrusted with the complicated management of a 'managed' currency. I told him there was no intricacy. If we undertook to provide so many grains of gold in exchange for rupees, I said, 'Why cannot you undertake similarly to provide 100 index figures for one rupee?' He said an index figure was a complicated thing. I agreed but pointed out that nothing was perfect in this world. He foresaw speculation as a result. I pointed out that speculation would be discouraged except in gold. He liked the idea but was nervous about putting the system in practice. I said only a dictator could do it. The world was suffering from a stupid democracy. We wanted democratic dictators. It sounded rather paradoxical, but he knew what I meant. I pointed out that 75 per cent of the political troubles were due to bad economics. India was suffering from a low level of prices which should immediately be put up by 50 per cent. He enquired whether it was necessary to have such a big rise. I said, yes, and pointed out that Sir Basil Blackett also agreed with me. I wanted him to study the whole question. In 1921 there was no unrest among cultivators. The political disturbance was confined to the working classes. Why is it that working classes are so quiet now and the whole agrarian population is so full of discontent? He agreed and pointed out that the Congress made efforts to stir up labour but failed. I said I had made a deep study of the subject and found that except in the consumption of cloth the villager had made cuts in all directions. This year he has been able to make both ends meet by selling gold, partial payment of land revenue and non-payment of interest. There would be no more gold left to sell next year and therefore he would stop entirely the payment of land revenue and taxes. I pointed out that my estate could collect only 5 per cent of the revenue in Chhota Nagpur. Whatever happened in

India it was impossible to have any peace for the next 15 years unless prices were raised, but we can escape the worst effect of this discontent if political disturbance is removed from the scene. I pointed out that to me it appeared a most puzzling as well as a most simple affair. It was a simple affair because we were on common ground. Dominion Status with reservations and safeguards was more or less a common ideal for the time being. Gandhiji wanted to discuss safeguards. Why was this not discussed and why was he not allowed interviews and discussions on various matters?

He remained silent. I tried to point out that Gandhiji was a reasonable man and explained to him my connections with Gandhiji. I told him that I had known Gandhiji since 1916, had been his ardent admirer since 1921 and worked with him in the R. T. C. I told him that I was one of the worst critics of the Government in political and economic spheres. Though I did not take an active part in the Civil Disobedience Movement I had done everything else to embarrass the Government and had very liberally subscribed to Gandhiji's constructive programmes. I could therefore claim that I knew which way Gandhiji's mind was running. He was a most reasonable man and very modest in outlook. I recognised that it was not possible to meet the full demand of the Congress but said that it was possible to introduce a Constitution which might not be rejected by Gandhiji. What is the use of introducing a Constitution which would not be accepted? Sir John again agreed with me. He said a Constitution was coming in any case. He did not think it would be of any use unless it was at least passively acceptable. I told him he could do much. He agreed with me about my description of Gandhiji. Findlater Stuart had spoken to him very highly of Gandhiji. He said doubts were expressed by himself to Findlater Stuart whether Gandhiji would not be rushed into the Civil Disobedience Movement, but Findlater Stuart told him no one on earth could rush Gandhiji into things which he did not want; but he said unfortunately he had been stampeded by his lieutenants. I assured him that his reading was incorrect. Gandhiji was rushed into things by Lord Willingdon. The Viceroy was not a man of imagination. Hailey was one. He was another. Lord Willingdon had no sympathy with Gandhiji. He did not know him and did not understand him. Sir John asked whether

Gandhiji was a practical man. I said, immensely. He said that Findlater Stuart had said that he was not very practical. I said for a western mind it was somewhat difficult to understand a philosophical mind like that of Gandhiji. He wanted to know how far Gandhiji would be prepared to accept reservations and safeguards. About the military I told him that we realised we could not get immediate control but Gandhiji would suggest certain formulæ which may be acceptable to all. About finance we were prepared to put ourselves in the position of a factory proprietor who had to deal with debenture holders. The debenture holder should not poke his nose into our day-to-day affairs so long as we paid him his dues. I proceeded further and tried to give him a constructive suggestion about the future. If Gandhiji was released and a satisfactory solution found about the terrorist movement, the situation could be eased and Gandhiji could co-operate. He listened to these things with great interest and said evidently I knew more than many men in India. He would like to discuss things further with me on his return and wanted me to go to Darjeeling. I promised to go.

CHAPTER V

LORD LOTHIAN IN INDIA

LORD LOTHIAN, who was Parliamentary Under-Secretary of the India Office and very sympathetic to India's aspirations, came out to India as Chairman of the India Franchise Committee in 1932. We had interesting discussions together and before the report of his Committee was published I wrote to him as follows in a vain endeavour, as it turned out, to secure a practical victory for Gandhiji, who was then in prison, and thus prevent the necessity for the future non-co-operation campaign :—

Calcutta, 4th May, 1932.

Dear Lord Lothian,

The newspapers report that your mission is completed and that you are flying back to England on the 11th. The report of your Committee will shortly be published and from what I hear I hope it will be satisfactory. You have been able to create a friendly impression on India and this is another gain. Let me pray that your association with India may be helpful in bringing about happy relations between the two countries.

I do not wish to write to you anything just now about the present situation. With your keen sense of observation and friendly appreciation you know the situation as well as any Indian. Why I am writing to you is that I feel that at this critical time when many important issues are to be decided I should again express my grave doubts about the success of the present dual policy as it is called. When we discussed the matter at the Calcutta Club you were convinced when you said that the best method to help India was to rush the reforms with the utmost speed. I raised the point as to what would be the use of reforms which may not be worked by the nationalists, and the same question has been rising again and again in my mind. I am afraid I can say almost with certainty that no reforms could be successful unless these have a backing behind them of progressive Indian opinion. I admit that it may not be at present possible to bring about a compromise between a radical India and a reactionary Parliament, but on further thinking I feel that it is not impossible to introduce

a Constitution which may have the tacit consent of Gandhiji and men of his school. This at least would give some peace to India and I am convinced that it is possible to find a method of achieving at least this last object.

I think there are two methods of achieving this object; either by securing the direct co-operation of Gandhiji or his indirect co-operation. The correspondence at present passing between Gandhiji and Sir Samuel Hoare encourages me to take a more cheerful view. The disadvantage of 1930 was that Gandhiji was not in touch with the rulers. That disadvantage fortunately this time does not exist. With goodwill on both sides, therefore, I think a way could be found.

Now let us analyse both the alternatives. First of all, is it possible to get his direct co-operation? I do not think it is so difficult. Supposing the Ordinances are not renewed, what would then be Gandhiji's position? The last resolution of the Working Committee decided on a policy of Civil Disobedience unless substantial relief was granted in the direction of Ordinances. If the Ordinances are not renewed the position is substantially changed. Then the only question which will require solution will be the situation in N.W.F. Province and Bengal. In the U.P. so far as I understand, more remission has been granted than what was demanded by Jawaharlalji* and therefore there should be no fresh difficulties. Supposing therefore that the Ordinances are not renewed and Gandhiji is released and granted an interview by the Viceroy and the Ordinances in Bengal and N.W.F. Province are discussed and a solution found of difficulties at both these places, then co-operation in constitution-framing and release of all political prisoners follow automatically. The only difficulty which I foresee in this direction is that opinion in India at present is much more bitter than it was in March last year. Gandhiji may find it difficult to carry with him the Congress to co-operate merely on the non-renewal of the Ordinances. The rank and file may ask: 'What is it that India has gained that we again talk of peace with the Government?' Gandhiji can undoubtedly carry the Congress ultimately with him but he will have to work hard.

The second alternative may be easier of achievement. Supposing the Ordinances are not renewed, why should not some

* Mr. Nehru.

leaders working under friendly instructions from Gandhiji participate in framing the Constitution? Any compromise which may thus be arrived at, will at least have Gandhiji's indirect blessing. I wonder how far Gandhiji will like such a procedure, but I feel that it is worth while exploring the practicability of this proposal. After all Gandhiji's object is to get a good Constitution and if a Constitution could be secured which would not have his disapproval, there would be a substantial chance of such a Constitution being worked smoothly.

I am writing this for your consideration because I very strongly feel that the Government would be making the greatest blunder if, relying on the Musalmans, Depressed Classes and the Princes, they introduced a Constitution which would not meet with the approval of nationalist India. In such circumstances the struggle would continue and India would have no peace for a very long time to come. The Government should ignore the Congress only if it is their intention that no substantial advance is to be made. And I am afraid the man in the street quite naturally suspects the Government's *bona fides* under this dual policy, as he reasonably asks what else could be the reason for ignoring the co-operation of the Congress. From the feeling prevalent in Calcutta I can see that even among non-official Europeans the question is being raised as to who is going to work the reforms. The leading article in the *Englishman* the day before yesterday also expressed sentiment somewhat on these lines. I, therefore, wish that no mistake of this kind should be made by the Government and avenues of securing the co-operation of the Congress should still be explored.

I wish you *bon voyage* and hope that I will soon send you my congratulations when your report is published.

I am seeing Sir John Anderson on the 10th and I intend to tell him what I am writing to you.

Yours sincerely,
G. D. BIRLA

Lord Lothian promptly promised to discuss these issues with the Secretary of State on his return to England.

14th May, 1932.

Dear Lord Lothian,

Many thanks for your letter of 8th instant. I hope you had a very pleasant and comfortable journey. I wonder whether you

liked it more than a voyage by sea. Personally I do not care much to fly.

Your remark about the sacrifices of the Congress was simply magnificent. It is impossible to estimate correctly the good effect of such utterances.*

I am indeed glad that you are going to discuss the points raised in my last letter with the Secretary of State. I feel as if there is going to be a change of outlook here, though I do not know whether it is not my own imagination. In support of what I said in my last letter I would add that unless the leaders are released from jail there is no chance of even the communal question being settled. I am glad the Government so far has not intervened and I do not think it is possible for Hindu Sabhaites like Mr. Jayakar, Dr. Moonje or Pandit Malaviya to pave the way for meeting the Moslem demands. Gandhiji alone can do it and it is no use the Government blaming the Indians for their failure to settle the matter when Gandhiji and most of the leading men are in jail. You may pertinently ask why this question was not settled in India before Gandhiji left for London. I admit the charge partially, but I submit that never before have Indians as a whole realised the necessity of compromising communal differences more than at present. To my mind the possibility of a communal settlement would be greatly enhanced if the leaders were released and a favourable atmosphere created for a calm consideration of all the important matters. And after the settlement of the communal question if Sir Samuel could get Gandhiji again in London in September and deal with him in Irwin fashion I think we can make much headway.

There is another problem which requires very serious attention. This is the economic depression. I am afraid it is not fully realised in England what a serious position has been created in India. Unless prices rise substantially I am afraid we are going to have a lot of trouble in this country some time next year. I spoke to Sir John Anderson about the situation and I felt that he realised the gravity of the situation.

The Ottawa Conference has more or less been given a burial from its very inception. The Government have a knack of doing things in their own manner. In 1930 Rainey wanted to impose Preference in favour of Great Britain in the cotton tariffs against

* This refers to the Report of the Lothian Committee.

the wishes of the whole Indian mercantile community with the result which we all know. This time again it is proposed to do something at Ottawa without any regard to the feelings of the Indian mercantile community. The result so far is that public opinion in this country has been so much roused against the Ottawa Conference that there is no chance of a calm consideration of the issues involved on their own merits. How much could be achieved by a friendly deal should have been realised by Gandhiji's utterances at Manchester in favour of preference. But in India the Government care very little to do things in a proper spirit. They want to impose things. This is just to tell you how at times troubles are created in India for lack of proper handling.

I am delighted at your feeling that the new Constitution must distribute power equitably among the main elements of the Constitution.

You ask me whether there is any chance of your seeing me in London this summer. This is a question which I should like to put to you. You get Gandhiji there and we will all accompany him.

I hope you are quite well.

Yours sincerely,
G. D. BIRLA

On the 19th July of the same year I had an interview with Sir John Anderson with a view to bringing about a personal meeting between Gandhiji and Sir John. The latter was anxious to meet Gandhiji during his term of office, as indeed were most of Britain's governors, though in some cases their motive was merely curiosity and their unwillingness to return to their own country and to admit that they had never met the most remarkable person in India. Sir John Anderson, however, had more serious motives than mere curiosity. But Lord Willingdon, the Viceroy, from a political point of view was interposing objections to Governors of Provinces meeting Gandhiji. I am glad to say that such a meeting, however, did eventually take place, but after great ordeals and suffering which could have been easily avoided. I had proposed to him that I should be allowed to meet

Gandhiji in jail. My intermittent diary contains a brief note on my conversation with Sir John:

Interview with J. Anderson on 19th July 1932. He said he spoke twice to Viceroy—Viceroy was not unfavourable about meeting with Gandhiji—J. Anderson will write—Procedure will be I will have to apply. I said Gandhiji will not talk politics unless he has permission—J. Anderson replied I can show my letter to Viceroy and his reply—I go for my own guidance—This will be made clear. He referred to my speech—I replied it was an interview—he appreciated my position—I made clear that our participation depended on Gandhiji—we cannot deliver the goods. I suggested that Gandhiji should be invited in spite of Ordinances. He said there were difficulties from Tories.

Then came Gandhiji's fast unto death.

My chief anxiety at this period was to get Gandhiji released from prison where he had begun a fast on the issue of Harijan Franchise, and I sent telegrams to Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir Samuel Hoare and Lord Lothian :

EXPRESS : SIR TEJ BAHADUR SAPRU ALLAHABAD

MAY I REQUEST YOU SHOULD WORK TO GET GANDHIJI RELEASED. FEEL CRISIS COULD BE SAVED BY ENTERING INTO PACT WITH DEPRESSED CLASSES BUT THIS ONLY POSSIBLE WITH GANDHIJI'S PERSONAL INFLUENCE. BESIDES HIS RELEASE MAY HELP ACHIEVEMENT OF OTHER IMPORTANT RESULTS. THEREFORE HOPE YOU WILL DO ALL NEEDFUL. GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA

CABLE: SIR SAMUEL HOARE, INDIA OFFICE, LONDON.

CRISIS IS SO SERIOUS THAT I THINK IT MY DUTY TO SEND YOU THIS CABLE. IN MY HUMBLE OPINION SITUATION COULD BE SAVED IF GOVERNMENT WOULD REALLY BE HELPFUL. FIRST OF ALL GANDHIJI WITH IMPORTANT LEADERS SHOULD BE RELEASED WITHOUT LEAST DELAY. GANDHIJI'S PRESENCE OUTSIDE WILL BE VERY HELPFUL IN ARRIVING AT A PACT WITH DEPRESSED CLASSES. THIS PACT SHOULD THEN BE CONFIRMED BY GOVERNMENT. THIS MAY LEAD TO OTHER IMPORTANT CONSTITUTIONAL SOLUTIONS. EARNESTLY IMPORE NO TIME SHOULD BE LOST IN RELEASING GAN-

IN THE SHADOW OF THE MAHATMA

DHIJI. NEED HARDLY EMPHASISE HIS DEATH WILL BE GREAT CALAMITY NOT ONLY TO WHOLE EMPIRE. I KNOW FROM PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE WHICH BELIEF I HOPE YOU SHARE HE IS AS MUCH A TRUE FRIEND OF BRITAIN AS OF INDIA. G. D. BIRLA.

To this last I received a reply from the India Office:

14th September, 1932.

Dear Mr. Birla,

I write to say that your telegram of the 13th September to Sir Samuel Hoare has been received. Sir Samuel is at present up at Balmoral Castle, and I am sending your telegram on to him there.

Yours sincerely,
W. D. CROFT

I do not appear to have kept a copy of my telegrams to Lord Lothian but I received the following acknowledgment and subsequently wrote to him as follows:—

India Office, Whitehall,
14th September, 1932.

Lord Lothian wishes me to acknowledge your telegram of 13th September regarding Mr. Gandhi's intention to fast. He has sent a copy of your telegram to Lord Irwin.

16th September, 1932.

Dear Lord Lothian,

I sent a cable to you about the release of Gandhiji and I dare say many others did the same. I also sent a similar cable to Sir Samuel Hoare and I find from this morning's papers that Gandhiji is to be released with certain restrictions—imposed on him on the 20th after he begins his fast. This is good to some extent but I am afraid even here the action is lacking in grace. The Government would have lost nothing had they released him immediately and without any restrictions. It would have been better had the Government released some of his important colleagues also because in this critical time every hand will be required to help. One cannot understand the logic of the Premier when he wants an agreed solution and yet puts the old man in jail immediately he lands in Bombay and releases him when he is on the verge of death. How he is to get an agreed solution under

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such circumstances is beyond the comprehension of ordinary mortals. Please excuse this warmth but you will appreciate our feelings when we find that instead of showing grace at this critical time the Government are making matters more difficult.

Please give us all the help you can and also your valuable advice. I will be with Gandhiji for the next few weeks and my address at Bombay will be 'Birla House, Malabar Hill, Bombay.' Even though you are a Minister I hope you will rise above officialdom and do all you can to help us.

Yours sincerely,
G. D. BIRLA

The history of the pact with Ambedkar need not be detailed here. I had quite a good hand in getting it concluded.

CHAPTER VI

SAFEGUARDS AGAIN

I WAS very disappointed with Sir Samuel Hoare's attitude at this time. Although he appeared to have some appreciation of Gandhiji during Bapu's visit to London for the Round Table Conference, he now seemed incapable of understanding that no British plan or offer of a Constitution to India had the slightest hope of succeeding unless it was one of which Gandhiji could approve. I, therefore, wrote Sir Samuel the following letter, in which I expressed freely my disappointment. The immediate occasion was an invitation to me to take part in a special committee of the Round Table Conference on the question of financial and commercial safeguards:—

Birla House, New Delhi,
2nd November, 1932.

Dear Sir Samuel,

I received today a telegram from His Excellency the Governor of Bengal inviting me on your behalf to participate in the deliberations of the Special Sub-Committee to be appointed for discussing financial and commercial safeguards. While I am grateful to you for the invitation and while I myself would love to participate in these deliberations, I am afraid there are circumstances which make my participation rather difficult and as I am sure you will not misunderstand me I think it my duty to explain to you my difficulties somewhat at length.

When in March last I used my influence to commit the Federation of Indian Chambers to a certain attitude I did so with a definite motive. Probably the motive was somewhat selfish, but there it was. I had thought that by offering you our co-operation, however qualified, I would convince you that we were true friends who were very eager to see permanent friendly relations restored between the two countries and I had expected that once we could get your trust and confidence it would not be difficult for us later on to convince you of the wisdom of our advice. I feel that in this object I entirely failed.

SAFEGUARDS AGAIN

In your letter of the 8th April, 1932, in reply to mine of the 14th and 28th March, 1932, you told me that you would write to me again, but I have had no further communication from you. You were kind enough to consult me about the Ottawa Conference and the co-operation of Indian merchants and I secured Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas' consent to go to Ottawa, but the abrupt end of the correspondence and the attitude of the Government of India made a clear impression on my mind that we had failed to be recognised as friends. The Federation of the Indian Chambers of Commerce was summarily ignored as regards Ottawa and even when you made your statement as regards the procedure of further discussion on the Constitution and stated that financial safeguards would be discussed by a Committee of experts, I had no notion of the exact procedure you were going to adopt. Even now I do not know anything about the composition or the terms of reference of the special Sub-Committee. And now at the eleventh hour I am asked to proceed to London, completely ignorant of the position, with the Indian mercantile community completely ignored and thus in an irritated mood. Having myself sponsored a resolution in my constituency and having got it committed to the same it can hardly be honest on my part to act independently unless I am satisfied that by doing so I am not going against the spirit of the resolution passed. If I violate the spirit of the resolution I degrade myself in my own esteem. And I hope you would be the first to appreciate this.

Please let me assure you that I am not at all making any complaints. I cannot for a moment claim that the Secretary of State should take me into confidence. It may have been pointed out to you that the Secretary of State should not carry on private correspondence with an ordinary man like myself and probably this ended the correspondence. I too would not have ventured to write to you direct but for the fact that you were kind enough to put me at ease in London by suggesting that I might write to you whenever I felt I could say something useful. I am, therefore, not making any complaints, but what I am pointing out is how difficult it becomes for a man to do useful work when there is no response from the other side, and I am afraid that my or Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas' going to London can be of little practical use until we are recognised as friends and some latitude given to do some useful work for the restoration of real peace.

Please let me explain what I mean by 'latitude' being given to us. I will draw your attention to paragraph A of the Resolution No. 3 of the Federation which begins with the words 'There is no genuine desire'. Now I have always put my own interpretation on these words. I have felt that we businessmen have got a limited influence; yet it is such an influence as can be of great help, if it is correctly utilised. My own interpretation of the words 'genuine desire' therefore has been that whenever the Government decides to make a correct use of our influence this would amount to a genuine desire on its part to come to an agreement with progressive opinion in India. And I submit that mere participation in the financial discussion is not the correct use of our influence. After all what could I or Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas do in England if we had no backing? The Indian Mercantile Community will not back us—my friend Sir Purshottamdas is already censured—and we have no claim to the backing of the Nationalist Section since we are not politicians. Therefore, even if we decided in London to accept certain safeguards we cannot bind anyone so far as Indian public opinion is concerned. We, therefore, simply aggravate the position if we work without any such backing. While, therefore, with proper backing we could be of great use, without it we are utterly useless. The only way for us to render effective service is that before we participate in the discussion of these safeguards we must be given latitude to use our influence to get Gandhiji to associate himself with the new Constitution, provided of course that we at least are satisfied with it, and I submit that our services could be usefully utilised to create such a circumstance. I admit it may not be possible for the Cabinet to meet Gandhiji's demand in full but I maintain, as I had also suggested in my last letter to you, that it is possible even for this Conservative Parliament to give India a Constitution which, while not fully acceptable to the Congress, may at least be such as may not be rejected by Gandhiji. I hope you will appreciate the difficulty of a Constitution being introduced unaccompanied by any good-will or co-operation on the part of the people who alone, in Mr. Churchill's words uttered very recently, 'can allay or excite political sentiments.' I am writing this with some confidence as I have known all along that Gandhiji is a man of compromise, and as I believe that you are a great friend of his you are in a position to appreciate him.

I tried to get permission to see him and discuss the situation before he began his fast, and His Excellency Sir John Anderson tried to help me. I did not succeed in getting permission from the Government. Then I got a chance to talk to him just before his fast but as other matters had then assumed greater importance I decided to wait. During the period of the fast he became very weak and so I did not want to tax his energy. After the fast, all interviews were suddenly stopped but I was allowed to see him in connection with the Anti-Untouchability work. I had a four-hour talk with him but I could not interest him in any detailed political discussion, as he rightly pointed out to me that I was not supposed to discuss such matters. He, however, gave me a clear indication that he was himself very eager to see peace restored, and also promised that if I came back with permission to talk on these matters he would give me something in writing. I again sought the help of His Excellency Sir John Anderson who again promised to write to Simla, which I am sure he must have done, but without any tangible result. The position just now is that restrictions are imposed even on correspondence and interviews in connection with the work for the removal of untouchability which I hope will be removed. A letter of mine on important questions bearing on Untouchability has been lying unanswered at Yeravada* for nearly a fortnight. I hope you know that I have been appointed President of the All-India Anti-Untouchability League and we are getting a wonderful response from all parts of the country. But even in this purely constructive and social work we are treated by the Government as 'untouchables'. With such an atmosphere prevailing how can you as a practical man expect that the mere introduction of reforms will do any good? What is required is an atmosphere of trust on the eve of the constitutional change.

I have written somewhat at length and I am encouraged to do so on account of my belief that the obstacle is not Whitehall but Simla. I sincerely appreciate your own difficulties but I maintain that by mutual co-operation they could be surmounted. Evidently you mean business, otherwise you would not set up this Committee to discuss financial safeguards, but let me advise you as one who has got very great regard for you to please get Gandhiji's commitment before you introduce any reforms, and in

* Gandhiji's prison.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE MAHATMA

this field I am prepared to work heart and soul and later on even help in the question of financial safeguards. If I am allowed I may discuss matters with Gandhiji without arousing the least speculations or causing any publicity. And I can even come to London to discuss the same with a view to finding ways and means to get his co-operation. But I do not want to pose as one who can deliver the goods when I know I cannot.

I hope I have explained my meaning fully and also hope that you will take it in the spirit in which I have written.

I am keeping your invitation private and this letter.

A resolution of the Federation is attached for ready reference.

Yours sincerely,

G. D. BIRLA

CHAPTER VII

THE HARIJANS.

FROM his prison in Yeravada Gandhiji busied himself on behalf of the Harijans. At this time we were founding the All-India Harijan Sevak Sangh of which I became the President. As President I asked Dr. B. C. Roy to be the President of the Bengal Branch of the Sangh. Dr. B. C. Roy, now the Chief Minister of West Bengal, seemed eminently suited for the task, being not only a firm believer in the cause, but also a devoted adherent of Gandhiji and one of his medical advisers. Some people, however, took the view that because Dr. Roy took part in politics, his selection as President would give an unsuitable political flavour to a purely social and humanitarian movement. Gandhiji, who had at first endorsed the choosing of Dr. Roy, allowed himself to be persuaded by the critics to revoke his approval, and he wrote a letter to the Doctor asking the latter to withdraw. Dr. Roy replied more in sorrow than in anger and his dignified protest wrought a swift change in Gandhiji, who 'unreservedly and unconditionally' took back all that he had written and begged the Doctor to continue. The whole incident has perhaps no great importance to-day, yet it is worth recording as an instance both of Gandhiji's impulsiveness and also his generous temper, and the nature of the bonds which bound us all to him. Yet he combined with the warm-hearted impulsiveness which he displayed when listening to his friends a steel-like inflexibility of will where great issues and principles were involved.

From a letter to me written from prison late in November, it is clear that Gandhiji chose the name of our organisation :—

Yeravada Mandir, 28-11-32.

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

Shindeji is complaining bitterly that we have stolen the name of his organisation. His grievance seems justified. We are concerned with work, not with names. Therefore, my inclination is that we name it All-India Harijan Sevak Sangh, both in English and in Hindi. You are coming down here, but I hope this will reach you in time.

Blessings from BAPU

This seemed to give Dr. Roy and myself the green light to go ahead, but the critics got busy and soon Gandhiji wrote the following letter to Dr. Roy :—

Yeravada Central Prison,
7th December, 1932.

Dear Dr. Bidhan,

I have had a long chat with Syt. Ghanshyamdas Birla, as also Satish Baboo regarding the Anti-Untouchability Board for Bengal. I have also several letters from Bengal complaining about the formation of the Board. Before it was formed Ghanshyamdas had told me that he was going to ask you to form the Board, and without giving any thought to the suggestion I at once endorsed it. But I see that the idea has not found favour in Bengal, especially so far as Satish Baboo and Dr. Suresh are concerned. They think that the Board is bound to have a party colour about it. I do not know how far this fear is justified, but I do know this, that the work of Anti-Untouchability should not become a party affair in any way whatsoever. We want all who desire the reform to associate themselves freely and wholeheartedly with any organisation that may be formed. I would, therefore, suggest that you should call all the workers representing different groups and parties and place yourself at their disposal and let them then choose whomsoever they like as President, offering to give your whole-hearted co-operation to the President and Board of their choice. I know that this requires self-abnegation. If I know you well, I know that this is not beyond you. Of course if you feel that there is nothing in the complaints made and that you will be able to smooth down all the difficulties and that you will be able to bring all the parties together, I have nothing to say. In making the suggestions that I have made I assumed the impossibility of

securing the association of all parties with the Board as it is constituted at present. I have now placed the whole thing before you. You will do whatever is best in the interest of the cause.

Syt. Khaitan gave me your message about Vasanti Devi, I told him that I wanted her to make her own choice, but wanted her to work effectively and ceaselessly in the cause of Anti-Untouchability. I am not enamoured of her accepting any office in any organisation. When I was there at the time of the Desh-bandhu collections, both she and I came to the conclusion that her job was not to run any organisation but simply to work whenever she was free and had the mind for it.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. GANDHI

Here is Dr. Roy's reply:—

36, Wellington Street,
Calcutta, *12th Dec.*, '32.

My dear Mahatmaji,

Your letter reached me yesterday. I heard from Mr. Khaitan the details of the discussion he had with you regarding the Bengal Anti-Untouchability Board. You told him that you were going to write to me. After hearing Mr. Khaitan, I was prepared for a letter from you such as you have sent me. Before I proceed further, you will allow me to mention that the position of the Presidentship of the Bengal Board was not of my seeking and I now know that Mr. Birla had, after consultation with you and with your approval, selected me as President. When the call came, I agreed, in spite of my imperfections and my other pre-occupations. I do not forget also that the whole scheme originated with you and friends who met at Poona and, therefore, when these friends wanted me to do so, I accepted the responsibility. You asked me to be the President because you were then convinced that I could do the work. Now that you do not feel so sure and want me to withdraw, I gladly do so. I am writing to Mr. Birla today offering my resignation. It is no matter of self-abnegation for me, because I have never in my life occupied any place or position for a moment when those who have it in their gift desired that I should not continue to do so.

You have, in your letter, suggested that I should call all workers representing different groups and parties and let them choose whomsoever they like as president. May I point out to

you that under the constitution of the League, the President of the Central Board nominates the Presidents of the Provincial Boards, who in their turn nominate the members of the Provincial Boards. I have no power to dissolve the Board already formed in Bengal. It is not, therefore, possible for me to follow your instructions even if I desired to, but I am referring the whole matter to Mr. Birla, the President of the All-India Board for him to take such action as he chooses.

You say in your letter: 'But I see that the idea has not found favour in Bengal.' I feel it my duty to inform you that in Bengal there are many parties and groups, besides those led by Syt. Satish Das Gupta and Dr. Suresh Banerji, who are interested in removal of untouchability and who are doing very valuable work now. We framed the Bengal Board very carefully and as Syt. Debi Prasad Khaitan must have told you, the Board was representative of the various groups. Many of the district bodies already in existence have written to us signifying their desire to co-operate with the Board and in fact, we have had no refusal except, as Syt. Khaitan told you, from Messrs. Das Gupta and Banerji, though each had different reasons. As you, however, seem to think that in Bengal a Board cannot function effectively unless with the co-operation of Syt. Das Gupta and Dr. Banerji, which they have refused to give, there is no option left but to dissolve the Board.

As the work of the League has already begun in Bengal, it would be difficult for me and the members of my Board to explain the position unless I get your permission to send this letter and the first paragraph of your letter to the Press. I hope you have no objection.

Yours sincerely,
B. C. Roy

Filled with remorse, Gandhiji immediately wrote as follows:—

Yeravada Central Prison,
15th December, 1932.

Dear Dr. Bidhan,

Your letter stuns me. I sent you a telegram immediately I read it. I had thought that we were so near each other that you could never misunderstand a friendly letter from me. But I see

that I committed a grave blunder. I ought not to have written that letter. I have therefore unreservedly and unconditionally withdrawn it. That letter being withdrawn, you need not take any of the steps adumbrated in your letter. Do please, therefore, go on with the Board as if I had never written anything to you. The mental hurt that I have caused you, you will generously forget. I shall not easily forgive myself for writing that letter to you. Someone had suggested, I cannot recall who, that you might misunderstand my letter and I foolishly said that you would never misunderstand anything I wrote to you. Pride goeth before destruction, and vanity before a fall. After these amends, I hardly think you need to publish the correspondence between us. But if, for the sake of the cause, you think it necessary to publish it, you have my permission, in so far as it may be necessary.

Please tell me how Kamala and Dr. Alam* are doing, and ask Kamala to write to me.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. GANDHI

* Kamala Nehru (wife of Jawaharlal Nehru) and Dr. Alam (the great nationalist of the Punjab, a friend of Gandhiji and a member of the Congress Working Committee) were both under medical treatment by Dr. B. C. Roy in Calcutta.

He also wrote to me on the same day:—

Yeravada Central Prison,
15th December, 1932.

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

I have sent you a telegram today about the name of the League, and another about the Bengal Provincial Organisation will go tomorrow.

First, about the name, I enclose herewith Rajaji's letter. I think that his argument is conclusive, and if it is at all possible to adopt his suggestion, you will alter the name accordingly. I was so possessed with the idea of service that I missed the implication to which Rajaji draws pointed attention.

Now, as to the Bengal organisation, I fear that I have committed a grievous blunder. I overrated my influence with Dr. Bidhan. I am sorry because I have given him pain; and I am sorry because I have placed you in an awkward position. He

will survive the pain ; you will surmount all awkward difficulty ; I shall not easily forget my folly.

I have sent Dr. Roy the following telegram :—
‘Your unsigned letter received today. Correspondence not meant for publication. Have told you distinctly if you feel confident you should continue work already begun. Accept my apology for what I now recognise was undue interference and what I had meant to be friendly suggestion. Please therefore treat my letter as absolutely withdrawn—Gandhi,’ and I enclose herewith a copy of the letter I am sending him. I do not need to add anything more. I hope that the incident will close without causing much worry to you. I enclose also a copy of Dr. Bidhan’s reply.

I have received your letter of the 12th December. The definition that Syt. Thakkar has sent you has been further altered by me. I enclose a copy of the altered definition. Pandit Kunzru had sent me the definition that Syt. Thakkar has sent you. I made alterations and sent him the altered copy. I see that Syt. Thakkar had not received the altered copy when he wrote to you.

I met about seven friends and followers of Dr. Ambedkar to-day. They complained or stated (because they said they did not wish to complain but merely to make a statement) that Dr. Ambedkar’s letter to Syt. Thakkar written on board the steamer making certain suggestions was not mentioned during the meeting of the Board in Poona. I told them I did not know that it was not mentioned, but I told them also that the letter could not have been passed by and it must have been considered by the Board. You will now please write to them or me as to what was exactly done in connection with that letter.

These friends also stated that our organisations were keeping up the split amongst the Harijans and wherever possible favouring Rajah’s* party. I assured them that such could never be your intention, that the endeavour of the Board would be to steer clear of party divisions, and that the endeavour of the Board and its Branches everywhere would be to cement the relations between the two parties for which, now that the political part of the question was settled, there was absolutely no need.

Although I have got additional assistance in the shape of Syt. Chhaganlal H. Joshi, and also an efficient shorthand assis-

* Mr. Rajah was the Government nominee, representing the ‘Untouchables’ in the Legislative Assembly.

tant, I can have no leisure. This much-needed assistance enables me to keep abreast with the growing work. Interviews take up a great deal of time, but they are all necessary. I do not therefore grudge them.

I hope you are keeping fit. You must do something that would induce sound sleep, not by way of drugs, but through natural means or dietetic changes. Have you tried the prunes in the manner I suggested? Some of the easy *asans* and deep breathing, which is what *pranayam* for health means, might assist digestion and induce sleep.

Yours sincerely,

BAPU

PS.—Since dictating the above letter, I have received the following telegram from Dr. Bidhan :—

‘Thanks for telegram respectfully submit do not understand what you mean by feeling confident. As explained in letter in view of present enthusiasm in Bengal any President and Board can perform Anti-untouchability work. If however you mean confidence in obtaining co-operation from those who refuse it when offered no one can ensure it. Measure of success will depend on funds and proper utilisation thereof. Please wire whether I and Board can rely on your full support if we continue —Bidhanroy’

To which I have sent the following reply :—

‘Thanks your wire ; by confidence I mean self-confidence ; of course you can rely upon such assistance as is within my power—Gandhi—16-12-32.

About this time Rajaji sent a characteristic note about the name of the Society:—

Extract from letter dated 12-10-32 from Syt. C. Rajagopalachariar, Calicut.

I do not quite like the change of name you have agreed to for the League. ‘Servant of Untouchable Society’ is good in itself, but it means a continued recognition of untouchables as such. ‘Servants of India’ or ‘Servants of Bhils’ or ‘Servants of God’ are all right because ‘India’ must be there, ‘Bhils’ is a race name and not a name implying inferiority, and ‘God’ is always there. But ‘Servants of Untouchables’ or ‘Servants of Slaves’ would not be right if we intend to abolish untouchability or slavery. Suppose

the American abolitionists had a league called 'Servants or Helpers of Slaves'. It would not have expressed the object. Of course the Society may close down when the institution of slavery or of untouchability is abolished. But the argument is not right, for it is the abolition in the psychology of men that is wanted at once. You would have to say 'Servants of Untouchables so-called' which is cumbrous and in reality open to the same objection. I would have liked 'Untouchability Abolition League' or (Society). As a matter of fact, I did not like 'Anti-Untouchability' as a phrase. It is so barbarous. 'Untouchability Abolition Society' would be further a literal rendering of the names already in use in Hindi, Gujrati and other Indian languages without any objection. It is really abolition of a slave status and the phrase Abolition would be suggestive and emphatic, as prohibition has come to stay in connection with drinks and drugs. *Service* to a group of men is not really the object and aim, if we think about it. It is really the *doing away* with the evil. There is a school of thought which would keep the segregation, and asks us to do all we can to make them live and eat more comfortably. This is not all we want to do.

I carried on the correspondence in the following letter:—
21st December, 1932.

My dear Bapu,

I have your typed letter with its enclosures. Dr. Roy had already sent to me a copy of his letter to you, and now with your reply to the same I have got the full correspondence with me. I should not like to waste your time over this matter any more, yet I cannot resist my inclination to write as I feel your mistake was somewhat of a different nature from the one as understood by you. There is no question of my being placed in an awkward position. If you put me even in a more awkward position, you can do so with pleasure. But even now I do not agree with you that your mistake was confined to overrating your influence with Dr. Bidhan. In fairness to Dr. Roy, I must say that he could not have helped feeling hurt. To my mind, the mistake lay in the fact that Suresh Babu and Satish Babu being more closely associated with you, you should have helped Dr. Roy in securing the former's co-operation instead of asking the latter to resign simply because your nearest friends would not give their co-opera-

tion to Dr. Roy. I may admit that Suresh Babu and Satish Babu had good reason to withhold their co-operation, yet I think you should not have chosen Dr. Roy for sacrifice. This, in my opinion, was your mistake. And I felt surprised when I saw your first letter to Dr. Roy, as constitutionally you are almost incapable of making such mistakes. We are so much dazzled with your superhuman personality that we have almost lost self-confidence in ourselves. The result is that whenever I feel doubtful about your actions I console myself with an explanation that the fault may be with my own capacity to understand the implication of your decision. So it was in this case. I still feel that in your last reply to Dr. Roy you should not have rebuked him, if I may use the word, for misunderstanding your letter. I hope I am not wasting your time. I am writing all this for my personal satisfaction and you may write to me if you think it at all necessary to do so.

As regards the definition, as you know in such matters I worry little. But your latest definition seems to be the best of all those discussed previously. As regards the complaint of Dr. Ambedkar's friends that we did not give serious consideration to the Doctor's letter, I think it is made under some misapprehension. Like Dr. Ambedkar's suggestion, there were many other suggestions before us which required to be considered and embodied in the Blue Pamphlet. But we decided not to discuss the Blue Pamphlet at all in such a big meeting and therefore appointed a small committee of three to discuss and revise the Blue Pamphlet in the light not only of suggestions by Dr. Ambedkar but of many other criticism which may be received from the Provincial Boards and other members. But I confess that our Secretariat is not so efficient as it ought to be. Poor old Thakkar is wandering from place to place and in the absence of a capable Secretary at the Head Office the work is, undoubtedly, suffering. Before we started this Society, Devidas had promised to help me, but he seems to be occupied with other work. In fact I made a grievance of it to him when I met him yesterday. But he has promised to get me a good man. As it is, I told him the work must suffer. I myself can get a good man, but you know, my getting a good man means payment of so much money. I can get a man only on the market value. What is required in such Societies is a man who wants to undergo self-sacrifice.

I wonder, therefore, whether you could help me. If he can take charge of the work Devidas can do wonders, but unfortunately he is not coming.

We are issuing the Journal about the beginning of January and I am expecting a contribution from you. (I have got it just now.) Viyogi Hari has been appointed to edit the Hindi Journal. I do not have a good man just now to look after the English Journal and so I am utilising our office staff to do the work. But as you will realise all this requires the services of a good secretary and I must have one.

About the name of the Society, I am afraid it would look ridiculous to change it for the third time. Rajaji's letter although it impressed you so much did not make an impression on me. But probably it is due to the fact that I look upon all these things with some indifference.

I hope you are quite fit.

Please do not worry about my health. I am just all right. I have not tried the prunes. I propose to do so.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

As will be seen from the above, we were then just starting the weekly newspaper, *The Harijan*, which Gandhiji himself edited and made famous. There were a number of obstacles and delays at the time of its launching:—

27th December, 1932.

My dear Bapu,

I have received both your articles. Unfortunately there is likely to be a small hitch in the publication of the first issue as we have not yet been able to get permission from the Government. A number of minor formalities have to be gone through, and the authorities are making enquiries. I hope it will not be delayed for more than a week.

As regards your fast, I hope you will decide to postpone it until we hear definitely from the Government. I have not the least doubt in my mind that the Government are not going to withhold their assent. As to whether they will announce their decision before the 2nd of January or after, it is difficult for me to say. But if you communicate direct with them, they will be able to tell you. Once Government give permission for

the introduction of the Bill, the rest will be easier. I have not yet seen the copy of the Bill, but I hope you have seen it and approve of the same. If the Bill is of a mere permissive nature it would not be sufficient, because then again the matter will have to rest on the sweet will of Zamorin. Something more, therefore, will be necessary.

I have asked Rajaji to come and see you with friends and probably they will be seeing you shortly.

Yours affectionately,

GHANSHYAMDAS

Yeravada Central Prison,

29th December, 1932.

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

I have your letter. The dazzle of my presence is really a greater embarrassment to me than to friends like you, and I wish we could work and discuss things as equals. I do not at all like that any special importance be given to what I say in comparison with some other persons who may happen to say the same thing. With this preface I must say that I wholly dissent from your diagnosis. If I had written a similar letter, say, for instance, to you, I do not think that you would have resented it. In other words, I would not have overrated my influence with you. How could I help Dr. Roy in securing the co-operation of Suresh Babu and Satish when I knew that such a thing was not possible, unless I simply coerced them into giving mechanical co-operation even between Suresh Babu and Satish Babu. Even in the Ashram, where I may be said to have equal influence with all, there are incompatible temperaments where I cannot look for co-operation, much less can I impose it; and inasmuch as I believed that Suresh Babu and Satish Babu were more effective people as plodders, I naturally desired the work to be in their hands, and I thought that Dr. Roy would appreciate my suggestion. Why should any one feel hurt if a burden is shifted from his shoulders and put on to another, considered more capable of carrying it? And I, as it now turns out, erroneously thought that Dr. Bidhan would not misconstrue my letter, take it in good light, and contest, if he disliked, the underlying assumption, but never resent the letter. Any way why do you say that I have rebuked Dr. Roy in my second letter? I think I have put the position fairly but if you have not followed it, you may read it over

again. I would like you to understand the motive underlying the second letter. I shall try to find you a good secretary who will work for the love of it.

I would warn you against issuing the English edition unless it is properly got up, contains readable English material and translations are all accurate. It would be much better to be satisfied with the Hindi edition only than to have an indifferently edited English weekly.

Of course, I know that there is no question of partiality, but it is as well to bear in mind how Dr. Ambedkar's people feel about all we do.

Yours sincerely,
BAPU

The Temple Entry Bill quickly followed:—

Yeravada Central Prison,
1st January, 1933.

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

I have your letter of 27th ultimo. I had seen the Bill. It is not permissive in the sense you have evidently imagined. It is permissive in the sense that the Bill does not declare all temples automatically open. But individual temples can be opened by the vote of the majority of the temple-goers, not at the will of the trustees.

I hope that your confidence about the assent will be justified by the event. Rajaji was here for 3 days, and we had long discussions about the Bill and the situation in Guruvayur in general.

I hope the formalities about the publication of the Weekly have been completed.

BAPU

2nd January, 1933.

My dear Bapu,

I have your letters of the 27th and 28th received in the same envelope. I confess I do not quite follow your argument. But I see that there is some force in what you say. I have no desire, however, to waste your time. I will wait until we meet. In fact, there were a number of other points which I would have discussed merely for my own satisfaction during my last visit to

THE HARIJANS

Poona. But finding you so busy I deliberately refrained. You mention in your letter having enclosed a copy of Roy's letter which I do not find.

I note what you say about the English edition and I will be careful as regards the selection of the man who takes charge.

As regards the postponement of your fast, in a way I am relieved. But that does not mean that we are going to slacken our efforts. The Viceroy's assent, I have not the least doubt, will be forthcoming at least before the 15th and I hope that you are satisfied with the nature of the Bill which is being introduced. As I discussed with you in Poona, do you think now we should take up the question of Vishwanath temple in Kashi? There is no likelihood of the temple being thrown open in the near future. But we can at least start Zone propaganda. I hope you will approve of the same.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

4th January, 1933.

My dear Bapu,

The Hindi Paper will come out shortly. But it will take some time before we start the English edition.

I have been thinking about what to call the English edition, and so far I have not been able to hit upon some happy word. I wonder what you would think if we call it *Prayashchitta*.* As this word gives some indication of the object which we have at heart, I thought you might like it.

Please let me know, if possible by wire, if you approve of this name or if you can suggest some other.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

* Penance.

6th January, 1933.

My dear Bapu,

I enclose herewith a letter which speaks for itself. I wonder whether you know much about the writer of this letter. I do not know how his services could be utilised, but probably you may be able to guide the writer of the letter himself.

Kasturbhai has sent Rs. 5,000 and I have written to Chinubhai asking him to pay a similar sum. So far there has

been no difficulty about finance. We have to remit to the provinces only when they all raise a portion of their expenditure and as provinces are slow in raising finance our contribution is automatically reduced. This does not mean, however, that the work is suffering in any way. In fact, your spirit is working wonderfully in every nook and corner of the country and, therefore, the cause is advancing without much effort on our part. I have, however, the consolation of feeling that I am associated with it.

Yours affectionately,

GHANSHYAMDAS

7th January, 1933.

My dear Bapu,

I have your letter of the 3rd with its two enclosures, one letter from Ramananda Sanyasi and the other from Ganeshilal Mistri. I will write to you again after making full enquiries about the latter. But in short I can tell you that Delhi is suffering very much from party politics and hence the trouble.

To take the case of Ramananda Sanyasi, it is correct that Raghunath Charity Trust has stopped a monthly contribution to his institution. They would have stopped it in any case, because they had been paying for the last 18 months (if my memory serves me right) continuously. But even if they had not stopped the contribution, I think the affairs of this institution now require a little more scrutiny.

There are two factions among the Arya Samajists in Delhi and both are fighting in a most scandalous manner. Ramananda Sanyasi's institution has recently been captured by one faction and a lot of energy is being wasted in mud-flinging. I, therefore, would be chary of financing these institutions under the present circumstances. When Ramananda Sanyasi comes out of jail, I will have a talk with him.

When I formed a board here, I consulted Lala Shriram, Deshbandhu Gupta and Pandit Indra. There was such a rush on the part of members of the depressed class to get onto the board that although we took a large number of members from both the parties of the depressed class nothing could satisfy one of the two parties. At one time we were threatened with resignations. But eventually, so far as I understand, the resignations were withdrawn. There was a similar rush from the caste Hindus and the result is that the local Board consists of about 50 members.

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Like the Arya Samaj, the depressed class is also suffering from party politics. There is no such thing as a Raja Party or an Ambedkar Party in Delhi. The choice of the leadership is made after a party has been created on account of local jealousies. It is, therefore, almost impossible to conclude a satisfactory arrangement. All the same I am asking Pandit Indra to explain to you matters more fully, he being more acquainted with the local condition.

Recently a Co-operative Society has been formed here to help the shoe industry. The Government officials are also taking interest in it. To me it seems to be a genuine effort to help, and so I have promised a loan of Rs. 5,000 to the Co-operative Bank at low interest. But I find that this Bank again is confined only to one party, the other party is not satisfied with it, and therefore another co-operative bank for the benefit of the other party is proposed to be established. So the work is carried on in such a dirty atmosphere.

However, as I have said above, Pandit Indra will write to you more fully on these matters.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

Yeravada Central Prison,
8th January, 1933.

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

In reply to your letter of the 4th I sent you a telegram yesterday. I have revived my suggestion that the English edition at least should be published in Poona, and it can be published, not simultaneously with the Hindi, but on Fridays, if the Hindi is published on Mondays. The English edition may then be issued under my supervision, and would take in as much as may be necessary from the Hindi edition. All the facts and figures, reports and the like will be taken from the Hindi edition, and there will be original things also in it. In that case, you need not send anybody from there, if there is no one available. I think I shall be able to get a local man, or more, to do the work.

I discussed this thing with Syt. Thakkar yesterday and he approves of the idea. I then suggested that he should discuss it with you, but he said it would cause delay and that therefore I should convey my views to you by post. If you really approve

of the idea, you may pursue it further, and may even come down here, if you think it necessary to discuss it. For this purpose you need not delay the Hindi edition. The English can come a week or two later.

I enclose herewith a telegram and a letter received from Lala Sham Lal. I enclose also a copy of my reply.

Yours sincerely,

BAPU

10th January, 1933.

My dear Bapu,

As you will see from this letter I have come to Gwalior on business and purpose to stay here for about a fortnight. Before I left I sent a message to Pandit Indra to write to you about Ganeshilal at greater length. I am afraid, you will be getting complaints of this kind in larger numbers in future. The reason is that, specially among educated Harijans, hopes have been raised which can under no circumstances be fulfilled. Many educated Harijans seem to be under the impression that this Society of ours is going to create a millennium. Any man who is not employed expects employment from us. Any trader in financial difficulty expects us to relieve him of his troubles. When I was at Poona a batch of Harijan students came to see me and I told them that they should not expect too much from us because even if we were fortunate enough to collect 6 crores and spend them in a year, it would mean only one rupee per annum per Harijan. The resources, therefore, are very meagre and they ought to appreciate this. Unfortunately, it will not be possible for them to appreciate it, and so such heart-burning and complaints are bound to pour in more and more during the course of time.

So far, however, as the question of a change of heart is concerned, we are making rapid progress and it is entirely due to your spirit, with which the atmosphere is so much surcharged.

As regards the name of the English edition, if we are to publish it in Delhi, we cannot have the same name for both as this is likely to cause administrative difficulties. If, however, it is issued from Poona this difficulty would not arise. So far I have not been able to get a good man to edit the English edition. But if you can manage it at Poona, I will be relieved of my responsibilities. Of course, I would not like you to undertake an

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extra burden but if you think that Poona is a better place, I personally have no objection. The decision rests entirely with you. But if I can be of any help to you at Poona, kindly utilise my service to the full extent.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

Yeravada Central Prison,
11th January, 1933.

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

I have your doleful letter of the 7th January, but you are not going to be disappointed or discouraged. What you describe is the common lot of most organisations. The best in a man, as also the worst, is drawn out when he is in charge of such organisations. The best is drawn out when he works with sufficient detachment.

Yours sincerely,
BAPU

CHAPTER VIII

BIRTH OF A MAGAZINE

14th January, 1933.

My dear Bapu,

As regards the English edition of the *Harijan* I have already written to you and I have nothing more to add. I hope you are already making arrangements to issue the same from Poona. We can send Shyamlal from Delhi if you want him there. Otherwise his services could be utilized in Delhi itself.

As regards the correspondence between you and Lala Shyamlal, before they wrote to you, Thakurdas Bhargava had approached me for a donation from our Society. I told him that their work was not mainly for the benefit of the untouchables and, therefore, I could not pay anything from the Society. Of course I paid him Rs. 1100 from my own pocket. But I told him at the same time that in case something was done specially for the Harijans, they could approach the Provincial Board and we may give some grant to the Provincial Board specially for this purpose. My own impression is that this work is not primarily for the benefit of the Harijans. The name of Harijan is unnecessarily exploited, of course for a good cause. But even for a good cause, one should not exceed certain boundaries. Your reply, therefore, is very appropriate.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

17th January, 1933.

My dear Bapu,

Recently an agitation has been set up in Bengal by a few interested persons against the Poona Pact. I personally am sure in my mind that they generally do not represent the true feelings of the Bengali caste Hindus. Most of the Congressmen are out of it. I hope you remember that Dr. Moonje granted an interview just before you began your fast stating that the Hindus would be prepared to give up voluntarily even cent per cent of their portion of the seats for the benefit of the depressed classes if it comes to that. The interview was granted under my persuasion. But this was after consulting Mr. Ramananda Chatterjee. It is not,

therefore, altogether correct to say that no important Bengali was consulted in this matter. Ramananda Babu now, I understand, grumbles against the Poona Pact. Panditji issued an invitation to all the important men of Bengal, but they had no time to come!

I do not think it would be advisable for me to participate in this controversy. This is a very delicate matter and it is better for a non-Bengali to keep himself aloof. But I wonder whether you would not like to write to Dr. Roy and Mr. J. C. Gupta. Do you also want me to say anything publicly? I have already written to Dr. Roy.

I have just received your letter of the 11th January in which you have mentioned Jamnalalji's views about the Blue Pamphlet. Yes, the resolution is not complete and it was brought to my notice first of all by Devadas. In fact, this particular portion of the pamphlet was written out by me and I had asked Mr. Thakkar to put in the relevant resolution. Although the omission was a mistake on his part, I myself am equally responsible. This again compels me to make a confession about the inefficiency of our Secretariat. To some extent this mistake was natural inasmuch as most of the papers omitted this particular portion of the resolution. Devadas and I discussed it at Poona and we were both puzzled how this particular portion of the resolution was omitted by Bombay papers. This has been a mystery to me all along. But we decided that at the time of the revision of the pamphlet this omission would be rectified.

About the other points raised by Jamnalalji, they require a little more consideration and we will keep them before us when we revise the Blue Pamphlet. I agree with him that there is nothing in the resolution authorising the League to change its name, but I do not know why so much importance should be attached to these small technical matters. The resolution was not exhaustive enough and a lot of powers have been created by ourselves for which there was no sanction but which were necessary under the existing circumstances. Of course we are going to register the body.

As regards the Treasurer, I have appointed the Secretary of my mills to act as Treasurer. The office being in my mills it is convenient to draw cheques from banks during my absence.

As regards Jamnalalji's suggestion about Mr. Tambekar I do not think he would come to work in the Society when he is getting

a decent pay in the Hindu University. I myself have begun to feel a great necessity for a good Secretary and I have already written to you about the same. If you cannot find a good man then I will have to appoint some one of my own choice. I hope you know that I am not giving my undivided attention to this work. This is natural under the present circumstances. I am still in business and am giving a good deal of my time to it. These days I have to give a little more of my time to my mills because they are simply glutted with stocks. When they were earning I did not devote so much time. But now that they are losing I have naturally to give a good portion of my time to them. I have written all this just to acquaint you with the facts. But in any case the services of a good Secretary are essential. I myself would like to give more time to the work of the Society, but circumstances just now do not allow me to give undivided attention.

I would not say that we are receiving complete statistics from our Provincial Boards as regards the opening of temples and wells, etc. But we are receiving fortnightly reports from every province and I believe they are giving us as much information as it is possible for them to give.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

Yeravada Central Prison,
17th January, 1933.

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

I have your letter of the 10th instant from Gwalior. I am meeting Syts. Deodhar and Vazhe tomorrow (Wednesday) about the English edition of the *Harijan Sevak*. I have already had a preliminary conversation with Vazhe since the receipt of your letter. It seems there will be no difficulty about publishing the paper here. But I shall do nothing in a hurry. I will send you the fullest information before actually embarking on the enterprise.

What is this opposition in Bengal against the Yeravada Pact? I am writing also to Dr. Bidhan enquiring about it.

I note what you say about the effect of prunes. Have you tried them at all?

Yours sincerely,
BAPU

BIRTH OF A MAGAZINE

Yeravada Central Prison,
19th January, 1933.

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

I have your letter of 14th instant. I had a prolonged conversation with Syts. Deodhar and Vazhe yesterday regarding the English edition, and as a result I have telegraphed to Amritlal Thakkar to send Shastri at once if he could be spared. Vazhe tells me that Shastri is the fittest man for doing the editorial work. He himself will help but cannot be completely identified with the paper. I can appreciate his reason. But both told me that though Shastri had applied to the Society for admission as a probationer, the Society would have no objection to Shastri taking up the editorial responsibility. Of course, so long as Mahadev and I have the time, the columns will be filled by us, and Shastri will carry out instructions, and in time to come write original articles himself.

I wonder when the Hindi edition will be out.

Yours sincerely,
BAPU

Yeravada Central Prison,
21st January, 1933.

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

I have your letter. I do not want you to come out with any public statement on the Bengal question; as you have noticed, I am not making any public statement myself, and I have anticipated you by copying you, that is by writing to Dr. Bidhan and Ramananda Babu. I am not writing to Syt. J. C. Gupta, nor is it necessary for me to do so. I may have met him, but I cannot say that I am even acquainted with him.

Please do not wait for the revision of the pamphlet till the present copies are exhausted. You can do one or the other thing, either issue a revised pamphlet suppressing the old copies, or paste the full resolution on the imperfect resolution in the existing copies, and send a public circular to the effect that by an oversight an incomplete resolution was printed in the pamphlet, giving the correct full text.

I quite understand that you have to look after your own business also, with more concentration today than before.

What is the hitch in getting *Harijan Sevak* out?

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The news about your health is disturbing. Why not have the necessary operation, if a reliable doctor advises it? I have learnt by experience that even dietetics and fasts have their limitations. They do not always answer. And whatever rest is necessary, you ought to impose on yourself. Dilatoriness in these matters should be regarded as sinful.

Yours sincerely,
BAPU

21st January, 1933.

My dear Bapu,

The Government's decision* should have come to me as a great surprise. But after having read the various intelligent forecasts by a number of news agencies, I was fully prepared for it. I find neither logic nor fairness in the Government's decision. I am now waiting to see what view you are going to take of the whole situation.

The present assembly, as it is composed, is capable of rejecting many good things and passing bad ones. In the first place, by the dilatory tactics of the Government, I am not sure when this legislation will come before the Assembly, and if it comes I am also not sure whether it will be passed when it comes before the House. We should not, therefore, expect much from Mr. Ranga Iyer's Bill. It would be more appropriate to concentrate on private efforts. But in the case of Guruvayur temple, private efforts will be of no great value. I, therefore, would like to know what you would want us to do.

In case you approve of Mr. Ranga Iyer's Bill, I think it will require redrafting. As at present drafted it is not likely to meet the situation. The language is very vague and probably from a legal point of view it is not a good draft. In case you approve of its introduction, it will require redrafting in consultation with you. I have, therefore, sent you a wire. I hope to hear from you by tomorrow. In case you want me to come to Poona, I will leave this place immediately for Poona; otherwise I will go to Delhi the day after tomorrow.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

* To remain neutral on the Temple Entry Bill.

Yeravada Central Prison,
25th January, 1933.

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

Here is the estimate for the proposed English edition of *Harijan Sevak*. As you can see, it is a very moderate sum. There will still be some overhead charges on clerical assistance, and whatever remuneration that might have to be paid to Shastri who has agreed to edit the paper.

I propose to bring out, to start with, 10,000 copies. Then if there is not that demand, we might slow down. My policy, as you know, is that I shall not handle the paper except to make it self-supporting. If it does not become self-supporting, I should conclude that there is inefficient management or editing, or that there is no public demand for such a paper. In any one of these cases, if the defect cannot be mended, the paper must be ended. I should give the paper a trial for 3 months, within which time it must become self-supporting.

I would therefore like you, after consultation with Thakkar Bapa and such others as you need to consult to telegraph your sanction of the expenditure, such as it may be, up to the final limit to be fixed by you. I suggest an addition of Rs. 200 per month at the outside to the figures as per estimate, excluding the postal and telegraphic charges. I should be able to give you more definite figures after I have seen Shastri. If you can pass the Budget, should I proceed with the paper whether you have brought out the Hindi edition or not? I understand that there is not likely to be any difficulty at this end about bringing out the paper.

I have your telegram from Gwalior about the Government decision on the Untouchability Bills. I hope you received my reply. I hope, too, that you have read my very exhaustive statement to the Press. I do not need, therefore, to add anything to the Press statement, for I have nothing more to add.

I am sending you a copy of my letter to Hariji about the Society receiving or seeking financial assistance from the Government. Here again I do not need to add to it. It speaks for itself.

I hope you are better. I would like you to treat your health

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as much of a business concern as any other, and thus not a thing to be neglected or wasted.

Yours sincerely,
BAPU

9th February, 1933.

My dear Bapu,

We have taken stock of the situation and the net result of my reading of the situation is that the Bill could be introduced with a Select Committee appointed in this session and can be passed in the Simla session only if the Government help. If the Government obstruct, then of course the Bill may not be introduced even in this session. But from what I see, I hope they will at least help the introduction of the Bill in this session ; but they would not be prepared to go beyond that. They would insist on the Bill being circulated, and although even if it were circulated it could be passed in the Simla session, this could only happen if the Government gave all the facilities. In the absence of their help the Bill has no chance of emerging out of the legislature.

Since I came here, we have had several conferences and the most important of them was held last evening and it was decided at the conference that prominent M.L.A.s should ask the Government to grant special facilities for the discussion of the Bill. A letter was drafted last evening and was signed by many prominent members. More signatures were to be appended today and I hope it is already in the hands of the leader of the House. I am, however, not very hopeful about any special facilities being granted by the Government. The members themselves do not like that the Bill should be rushed through in the present session. Most of them agree that it is not necessary to circulate the Bill, but at the same time they do not desire that it should be rushed through. All they desire is that it should be introduced and put into the hands of the Select Committee during this session, and be passed at the Simla session. I am not acquainting you with all the details of the procedure as I am sure you are already fairly well acquainted with the same. But I may just tell you that it is possible to do away with the formal introduction part of the Bill if the Government would simply publish it in the *Gazette*.

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One hurdle would be crossed if the Government would help. I am afraid, however, that they will not help to this extent.

We are meeting again tonight with important members and we are trying to persuade some of them, who have got Bills standing in their names for discussion, to withdraw the same and clear the field for Mr. Ranga Iyer's Bill. I trust that most of them will be helpful. One or two of them, I am afraid, will not take a helpful attitude, but I do not think that will obstruct the formal introduction of the Bill which is likely to come up on the 27th of February, unless the Government grant special facilities and publish the Bill in the *Gazette* in lieu of its formal introduction.

Just one thing more. There is a convention in the Assembly that a Bill cannot be taken into consideration on the very day of its introduction. This means that even if the Bill is introduced on the 27th of February, it cannot be taken into consideration on the same day. Of course the convention could be waived with the consent of the House, the President, and the Government. But I do not think all the three parties would agree. In some respects even the House itself is very conservative about their conventions and I, having been a member of the Assembly for four years, fully sympathise with them.

I propose to go to Calcutta after I feel that there is nothing more to be done here and will get my nose attended to as I understand there is no specialist in Delhi who could perform the operation.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

(Copy of the letter from Gandhiji to Mr. C. Rajagopalachariar, dated 13-2-'33.)

I have read your and Ghanshyamdass' appeal to the public. Why do you even so much as mention the fast and its possibility? You surely undermine its spiritual value, if the fast, if at all it comes, is to be a spiritual fast. I do not even know that the fast is a certainty if the Bills do not pass during this session or at all. I do not know when it will come. I think you should all dismiss it from your consideration altogether and let the public mind work unfettered by it. When it does come, it will produce its own effect if it is a spiritual act. If it is the product of a diseased or an arrogant mind, it will merely torture the body and

excite pity or contempt according to the temperament of the people who may hear of it. Do take this advice as from an expert and act up to it to the fullest extent.

Then you have seriously to consider Pandit Malaviyaji's attitude. He is thoroughly against the Bills, especially if they are not to be circulated. Of course, I do not share this view. I shall be writing to him. But you should see him, if you can at all spare yourself or send Devadas alone. But on this I have no firm opinion. You will do what appeals to you most. You know the outside atmosphere first-hand. All my knowledge is second-hand and therefore worthless.

I had, what must be described in one way as a very unsatisfactory interview with Dr. A.* He is irreconcilable. In another way it was satisfactory. I know him better than I did.

Please share this with Ghanshyamdas and Thakkar Bapa.

BAPU

* Dr. A. was no doubt Dr. Ambedkar.

Our two great preoccupations at this time were the Temple Entry Bill, to enable the Untouchables to worship in Hindu temples, and the launching of the weekly paper to promote their cause.

14th February, 1933.

My dear Bapu,

The bill has been balloted for the 27th of February and if everything goes well, Mr. Gaya Prashad Singh or Mr. S. C. Mitra will introduce it on the same day. But I doubt very much whether it will at all be introduced. First of all, there are Bills in an advanced stage and even if all of them are withdrawn, at least Haji Wajiduddin, who has got in his name a Bill to repeal the Sarda Act, will not withdraw, and that alone will take the whole day. So all in all, the Bill may not be introduced even on the 27th and as you know merely introducing will serve no good purpose. The Bill could be introduced on the 27th, in spite of other Bills in the field, only if the Government would grant special facilities to allow its introduction.

As I had written to you in my letter, if the Bill is published in the *Gazette*, it could be taken as formally introduced. Mr. Ranga Iyer has already written to the Government, but so far

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he has received no reply. All that I have heard is that we shall get no special facilities. The letter proposed to be sent by the M.L.A.s to the Government asking for special facilities has now been sent. Only 12 signatures have been appended to it so far.

There is party trouble in the Nationalist Party itself, and then there is rivalry between the Nationalists and the Independent Party. Efforts are being made to get a similar letter sent by the Independent Party. Except the disappointment caused by the slow progress of the Bill, in other respects the situation is quite satisfactory and the country is moving with rapid progress. People are taking more and more interest in the problem of untouchability and I am quite satisfied with the result.

Pandit Malaviyaji was going to issue a very bad statement strongly opposing the introduction of the Bill, but he has been persuaded to stop it for the time being.

The Hindi *Harijan* is still in the melting pot. C.I.D. people are making enquiries about Mr. Gupta whose name we have given as Printer and Publisher. They have asked the Nagpur Police to send full reports about Mr. Gupta. In spite of our best efforts we have not been able to get the matter expedited. Mr. Thakkar saw the Deputy Commissioner twice but could not do anything to expedite the matter.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

18th February, 1933.

My dear Bapu,

There is nothing important to mention just now. Canvassing is going on from both sides and the orthodox are no less busy than ourselves. When we got some M.L.A.s to ask the Government to grant special facilities the other side also got a number of M.L.A.s to object to this course. We have decided now that if we are to command a greater measure of support from the M.L.A.s we should not try to rush the measure through the House and so we have to reconcile ourselves to the circulation course. I know you do not agree with this, but personally I feel that for all practical purposes there is no difference between the circulation and the appointment of a Select Committee. Even if a

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Select Committee is appointed, nothing could be done before the Simla session and even if the Bill is circulated with a specific time limit the Select Committee could be appointed in the Simla session and the Bill may then be taken into consideration. Thus in reconciling ourselves to the circulation course, we are not wasting any more time than would be wasted in any case, and so we have got the M.L.A.s to ask the Government to give such facilities for the introduction of the Bill that at least the Bill may be sent out for circulation in this session for eliciting public opinion, with a definite proviso that it should be returned to the House before the Simla session. I hope you will not find any serious objection to this step.

I have heard that a large fund has been collected by the orthodox group. Money is coming from the South and a portion thereof from some Marwaris in Calcutta and Bombay and also a good portion from the Maharaja of Hathwa. I do not know how far this is correct. But it seems substantially to be true.

I regret that you had to rebuke us both, publicly that is, Rajaji* and myself. We have been quarrelling between ourselves as to who ought to be blamed for that particular portion. But I distinctly remember having told Rajaji not to say anything about the fast, of course on different grounds. The interview was drafted by Rajaji himself and in the original draft no mention was made about your fast. The original sentence referred to ourselves having promised to you to act with redoubled energy, and assured you of getting the Bill passed during this session, or something like this. I said that I could not sign that agreement because I had neither made any promise nor did I think I was big enough to make such a promise. Besides, it would not be correct to say that I would work with redoubled energy. To this it was suggested that we should give at least some indication to the public as to how far your mind was bent on this Bill, and the portion referring to your fast was the outcome of this anxiety. I, however, see your point and agree that we should not have mentioned anything about it.

I hope you are keeping quite fit.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

* Mr. C. Rajagopalachariar.

23rd February, 1933.

My dear Bapu,

We had a tea party yesterday at the Western Hotel and about 35 M.L.A.s attended. We received a better reception than we expected. Some of the M.L.A.s, even though opposed to the Bills, were quite favourable towards their being introduced and circulated for eliciting public opinion. Our demand being now very modest, we are receiving more support than before. It looks, therefore, as if the first Bill of Mr. Ranga Iyer may be introduced on the 27th February and circulated on the 24th March. A number of M.L.A.s promised that they would see that the other Bills obstructing the way do not take an unnecessarily long time and thus hinder the introduction of the Untouchability Bill. The second Bill, that is, the Temple Entry Bill, is not due on the 27th February, and I do not think it will be introduced on that date. I had a lengthy discussion yesterday with Sir Brojendra Mitter and although I reminded him that special facilities were given in the case of the Sarda Bill, Sir Brojendra told me that the Government would not even think of giving special facilities until they were convinced that unless they provided some accommodation the Bill was not likely to come up before the Assembly.

There is still a wrongly held notion in official quarters that the untouchability work is only a political stunt. This is really deplorable, but I am afraid it will take some time before the real truth dawns on them. Malaviyaji's attitude, however, has proved at least one thing, that in taking up the untouchability work you have alienated the alliance of some of your best political friends.

Rajaji's speech last evening at the tea party was very impressive and it was the envy of many M.L.A.s. I too felt at home, having met many old friends after a long time and the party was thus a great success.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

Benares, 5th March, 1933.

My dear Bapu,

I have come here from Delhi and propose to stay here for 5 or 6 days more. Then I will go to Calcutta. I had originally intended to have my operation performed in Calcutta this

time. But I find that I must return to Delhi by the 20th. The Bill is coming up on the 24th and I felt that I might be present at that time although I do not think much needs to be done now. I would, therefore, hardly have a week at my disposal in Calcutta, and so this operation is again going to be postponed.

I had a lengthy discussion with Panditji*. I found that Mathurdas had already seen him. As regards the ultimate ideal there may be no difference between you and Panditji, but in practice you are poles apart. Panditji's outlook is entirely different. He wants to go slowly and is not prepared to displease anyone. Therefore, he has to adopt methods which are not acceptable to you.

During the discussion Panditji admitted that there were legal difficulties, but would not admit that they could not be overcome except through legislation. He went even to the length of saying that if he were convinced that there were real legal difficulties, he would be prepared to take measures to correct the legal defects effectively, either through legislation or through fighting another test case. When I suggested that we might have a test case started on the issue of Kashi Vishwanath temple, he said that it would be impolitic. Panditji believes that your methods are likely to cause greater delay in getting the untouchables into the temples. In reality, what he wants to do is to avoid a clash with the orthodox.

My interpretation about the Allahabad resolution is confirmed by what he says. According to that resolution an untouchable cannot enter the Vishwanath temple.

Before I left Delhi, I tried to ascertain from official quarters what chances the Bill had of being introduced on the 24th. They assured me that they did not apprehend any hitch. We may, therefore, cross the first hurdle on the 24th of March. But I do not feel very enthusiastic about its future progress. I do not admit that we shall lose any special time by the circulation of the Bill, but there are so many other difficulties which you fully realise.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

* Pandit Malaviya.

Birla House,
Benares, 8th March, 1933.

My dear Bapu,

I have seen your letter of the 2nd March. As regards Mr. David's scheme,* the money will be put in the bank. So far we have received a promise for Rs. 1,000 per month, purely for scholarships, from the Raghumal Charity Trust. This sum is to be paid for a period of twelve months only. However, I hope that we shall be able to get this donation renewed after the end of this year. This money could easily be utilised for Mr. David's scheme.

As regards collecting more money for this purpose, I doubt whether we can get many promises just now. The reason is that whoever wanted to pay has done so already to the various Boards of our Society. Now we have not spent much so far and if you agree, I would suggest to them that the Central Board too would be prepared to incur a proportionate burden in case they came forward to share it with them. But I do not expect any satisfactory response from the Provinces. Therefore, the best course would be in my opinion, for the time being, to pay the money from the Central Board. Suppose, we paid Rs. 20,000 from the Central Board, and a promise for Rs. 12,000 for 1933 from the Raghumal Charity Trust is already there, it makes a total of Rs. 32,000 and if you write a few personal letters, say, to Ambalal and to a few other friends asking them to pay Rs. 2,500|- each, I am sure they would respond. I myself would pay a similar sum. Thus a decent start could be made. Please, therefore, write to me at my Calcutta address what you think of my proposal.

We have so far collected, including the provinces, a little over two lakhs of rupees for the Harijan work. The donors drew no distinction whether we approached them for Mr. David's scheme or for the funds of the Central and Provincial Boards. They were approached to pay for the Harijan work, and so they have paid. I, therefore, do not think it would be desirable for us just now to approach the donors again especially for Mr. David's scheme. I will, of course, approach Lala Shriram when I go to Delhi and, if you like, you may also write to him personally.

As regards the Hindi *Harijan*, I have been taking some personal interest in it. As you will notice, I have even been

* For collecting subscriptions from Caste Hindus to provide higher education for Harijans.

contributing articles to it. The defects pointed out by you were already noticed by me before your letter arrived, and were brought to the notice of Hariji. I take it your criticisms are confined to the first issue alone. The second issue, in my opinion, was a decided improvement, yet I think it requires further brightening up and I hope that we will be able to give you more satisfaction in future. But please write to me from time to time if you have any criticisms to offer.

As regards my health, just now there is nothing wrong with it. The nose is not giving me any special trouble, yet I, too, want to attend to it as soon as I find time. But I am afraid, I will have to postpone it a little longer. The operation involves fully a fortnight's rest and I cannot undertake it before the 24th of March.

In the postscript you mention a Selection Board. I do not quite follow this. Probably it refers to Mr. David's scheme, but I do not remember your exact suggestion. In any case, until I go to Delhi I cannot take up the matter. So there it will remain. I will reach Delhi on the morning of the 19th and then I will have a further talk with Mr. Thakkar. Meanwhile I will await your reply at my Calcutta address.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

The *Harijan* had an immediate success, as the following letter reveals.

Yeravada Central Prison,
9th March, 1933.

My dear Ghanshyamdass,

The English *Harijan* has become self-supporting already. The subscriptions received to date from street sales and annual subscribers leave a balance without the aid of the Rs. 1,044/- from the Central Board. This money can, therefore, now be refunded. Will you kindly tell me how you would want this money to be sent to you? I understand that you have to pay something to the Maharashtra Board. My enquiry as to the method of refunding the money is merely with a view to saving commission on money order, draft or cheque.

Arrangements have been made to issue a Gujrati *Harijan* also. It is being issued from Poona. The Bombay Board has

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guaranteed the cost for three months in the event of any loss being incurred, but I have no such fear.

Yours sincerely,

BAPU

PS.—[In Hindi] : Your letter written from Benares has arrived.

You have been postponing the operation, which I do not like.

Calcutta, 16th March, 1933.

My dear Bapu,

I am leaving this place tomorrow for Delhi. I see that you are annoyed for my delaying the operation on my nose. But I could not help it. There is not a good surgeon in Delhi and I could not afford to stay in Calcutta. But I took the opportunity of getting myself examined by Dr. Roy and also by a nose specialist. The nose specialist recommends an operation, not for the deviation of the septum but for a permanent drainage in the antrum. In fact both these operations have been recommended to me by a few specialists. Dr. Roy proposes to try some local application for a month or so. In any case I cannot have the operation performed until I return from Delhi.

The work in Calcutta proper is going on satisfactorily so far as the constructive side is concerned. About 20 schools are being conducted, but all this is being done by some Marwari workers. But Satish Babu is working hard. Money is being collected, which is being done by Khaitan and some of my other friends. I had a long talk with Dr. Roy about the Calcutta bustees (slum tenements) and I am taking him this afternoon to show him some of the places. I hope he will give more help. It was suggested that the work could be more successfully done if Satish Babu joined the Board. I have given a hint to Dr. Roy and have left it to him to take the next step.

I have suggested to some of my friends to subscribe to Mr. David's scheme in yearly instalments of Rs. 400/- per year. Business is so bad that I have no heart to ask people for money. But I hope that some of them will pay. In any case, as I have written to you before, we can make a decent beginning with the money at our disposal.

I am glad to hear from you that the English *Harijan* has become self-supporting. I am afraid the Hindi *Harijan* cannot compete unless you give your special blessings in some of the articles which you write in the English *Harijan*. The circulation,

of course, is increasing, but I will write in greater detail about it when I go to Delhi.

Yes, we have to pay the Maharashtra Board, but only when they themselves collect 1/3rd of their budget. I do not think they have been able to do much so far. The best way to remit money to the Central Board would be to send it to Bombay to my firm and they will redirect the same to Delhi. Thus you will save the commission.

I take it that you have seen in the Press that the Bengal Council have denounced the Poona Pact. It was not a severe defeat. But I did not like the attitude of the Council at all. Naturally, I did not like to express any views about this matter to the Press. But I feel that something has to be done to counteract the propaganda which is carried on against the Poona Pact. I am enclosing herewith cuttings from today's *Advance* and *Liberty* which will give you an idea of their editorial attitude. Satish Babu,* however, tells me that the general public is not at all against the Pact. It could be said without exaggerating the position that opinion in Bengal is divided. Bidhan Babu† himself is not in favour of the Pact and, therefore, no leader of importance has said a word so far in favour of it. I had a talk this morning with Satish Babu and have asked him to approach Sir P. C. Roy and Dr. Tagore. If they agree, then a meeting could be held to pass resolutions in favour of the Pact. I am going to have a talk with Dr. Roy this afternoon. This is just for your information.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

* Mr. Satish Das Gupta.
† Dr. B. C. Roy.

It was a hard task collecting funds for our work in the Untouchables' cause.

21st March, 1933.

My dear Bapu,

I arrived here the day before yesterday and I propose to stay here for a few days. The annual session of the Federation will be held here about the middle of April. By that time, I also hope to be here.

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While in Calcutta I took Dr. Bidhan to visit a number of bustees inhabited by the Untouchables. There are in all 600 bustees out of which about 200 have been improved during the last few years. They are called improved bustees. They have got light, water and a sewer system. It is possible, therefore, to put up public latrines in some of these places. But there are about 400 bustees where the condition is simply horrible. Some of these are across the canal where there is no sewer system. The result is that the drainage system in these bustees is terrible. Being below the level of the main road every drop of water used accumulates. Water taps, in order that water may not accumulate, are generally discouraged. Latrines are simply terrible as there is no drainage. People commit nuisance in the small by-lanes which are the only thoroughfares for the huts, and in the hot weather it is unbearable. During the rainy season the water accumulates knee-deep as there is no outlet. Now the situation for such bustees is either the demolition of these bustees altogether or the making of a proper drainage system. I was told that in order to have the sewer system in the whole area about 50 lakhs of rupees would be required which was out of the question. The other alternative is to put small pumps in some of these bustees to pump out the accumulated water. Anyhow the trouble is not easy of solution, and yet it must be solved. Dr. Roy told me that he himself felt helpless in the hands of his own bureaucracy on the one hand and Councillors on the other. Most of the Councillors are interested either directly or indirectly in these bustees, and when the question for reform comes up they put up opposition. I found Dr. Roy genuinely anxious to do something. In fact, those bustees which are capable of improvement have already been improved and he promised to take the others in hand. This is just for your information.

I saw your article today in the *Harijan* suggesting improvement in the methods of carrying night-soil. This question was discussed by me with Dr. Roy when I was in Calcutta. He told me how, when they tried to introduce this system in the Corporation, they met with strong opposition from the sweepers. The reason was that if the night-soil is carried in carts, fewer men are required and they immediately put up opposition when they heard of this reform. Then there are some Councillors who pose as the leaders of the sweepers, and they instigated them to put up this opposition.

As regards the Hindi *Harijan* I will write to you further after a day or two. I am taking a keen interest in it. I myself wrote a few articles in it, but I am not writing any more because I am not sure whether you liked or disliked them. I did not like some of the translations of your articles. One by R. was, in my opinion, the worst. Please, therefore, do not send your article direct to him, unless you yourself like the translation. I should like to receive further criticism from you about the paper.

With reference to Mr. David's scheme I am really sorry that you are not pleased with the results. I know that I took it up warmly. But I must confess that I was terribly disillusioned in my expectation as regards the finance. I thought people would simply be delighted to pay, at least those who have got money. But in spite of my efforts in Calcutta I have not been able to go above Rs. 50,000. In Delhi I walked from door to door for two days and I got only Rs. 1,500/- after great difficulty. One big contractor, who is supposed to be a great reformer and a Congressman and who has got sufficient money, promised to pay, but never paid. I am in daily communication with a number of my friends in Cawnpore, and although they write nice letters they do not pay. Ahmedabad is also hopeless. In Bombay, four Marawari firms, after having promised subscriptions, are withholding payment. I do not think this is because people do not like the work. But everybody wants to evade payment, if it is at all possible. I myself can pay anything that you want me to pay, but I confess that I cannot bring money from others. After I wrote to you I was able to collect Rs. 2,500 more from three sources which you may use for Mr. David's scheme. I suggested to a number of friends in Calcutta that they might pay in instalments, but I had no satisfactory response. This, in short, is the position as regards fresh collections. But I do not agree with you that we should not pay from the Central Funds. I have asked all the Boards to submit their accounts showing how much has been spent for establishment and how much for other constructive work. So I would repeat that you may use Rs. 20,000 for Mr. David's scheme from the Central Fund and Rs. 6,000 from the Raghumal Charity Trust Fund. The latter has promised Rs. 12,000, but half of it has to be spent in Bengal, of course for scholarships. But as Dr. Roy wants to spend on smaller scholarships, the Bengal money is not available for Mr. David's scheme. You will have

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thus Rs. 20,000 from the Central Board, Rs. 6,000 from Raghumal Charity Trust, Rs. 2,500 from myself, Rs. 2,500 from Janaki Devi and Rs. 2,500 collected by me recently. Thus it amounts to Rs. 33,500. We may be able to collect a little more. But if we can begin with Rs. 40,000 it will be a decent sum. After you have made up your mind I will have a talk with Mr. Thakkar about the Selection Board. Please write to me again after you have carefully considered my suggestion.

I approached some of my Sanatanist friends in Calcutta. But although they talk very politely, they do not pay.

I hope you are well. My *namaskar* to Sardar, Mahadevbhai and Jamnalalji.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

Bapu's next letter began by urging me not to postpone an operation.

Yeravada Central Prison,
23rd March, 1933.

My dear Ghanshyamdass,

I have your letter and the cuttings. Unless you make time for the operation I know you will never have the time. This always happens with busy people, and, therefore, it is necessary to consider matters of health as real matters of business. I do not write this as a philosophic truth, but as a practical truth which I have enforced in my own life and in that of others. I hope, therefore, that you will set apart a month or so for the treatment and make an appointment with a doctor beforehand with the fixed resolution of keeping that appointment.

I note what you say about the work in Calcutta.

About Mr. David's scheme I hope to hear from you further.

I shall certainly write something in the columns of the English *Harijan* about the Hindi edition as soon as I find the Hindi to be up to the mark. I have written fully about this to Thakkar Bapa, as also to Viyogi Hari. I need not, therefore, repeat what I have written to them. You will give to it what time it is possible for you to give, and make it brim-full of instructions and information so that no worker would care to be without it.

You suggest that I should send the money due to the Central Board to your firm in Bombay. How should I save the commission thereby, unless you have meant that I should send notes through someone going to Bombay? If I do that it would mean my having to run some risk of the money being lost. I have not that courage.

As to the denunciation of the Yeravada Pact by the Bengal Council, I have not felt much disturbed and I am not quite certain that counter-propaganda is necessary at the present moment. In no case can the Pact be revised unless all the parties to it agree. It will be time enough to apply our minds to the Bengal opposition when the parties are regularly consulted. I was consulted and I have sent my opinion, of which I send you a copy. But you and Satish Babu know much better than I what to do in Bengal.

Yours sincerely,
BAPU

Three days later he wrote again:—

26-3-33.

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

For the present I shall be content to write about a couple of things, or may be three.

The only things we find worth reading in the Hindi *Harijan* are your articles. Your language is both sweet and forceful. But this alone will not satisfy me. So long as things are not managed there properly, articles will continue to be sent from here. Mahadev and I myself will translate, and Viyogiji will polish our Hindi. Then there are notices, news, provincial news, etc., to be sent on behalf of the Sangh; this means the sale of thousands of copies of the Hindi *Harijan*. It should, in fact, become the official organ of the Sewa Sangh. I have refused to send the articles to Ramdasji or to anybody else for translation work. The paper cannot be run like this. In case Hindi translations are not available and Viyogiji cannot do the work himself and it is not possible to make any other arrangement, then it is better to stop publishing the Hindi edition.

I find the necessity of greater work in connection with the Calcutta business.

About the David scheme my opinion is that it should be

studied and digested. I shall write in detail. Form examination boards.

Blessings from BAPU

28th March, 1933.

My dear Bapu,

There are one or two points on which I want your advice.

When at Benares, I heard of a number of *domes** who changed their religion some time back, and who, on account of the present movement, want to re-enter the fold of Hinduism. The local Arya Samajists wanted financial help from the Society in order that they could be reclaimed. I personally saw no objection to it, so I have promised to help them from my own pocket. The question is : should not the Society interest itself in such a matter ? If not, why not ? When we refuse to take interest in such matters people legitimately criticise us that we are too eager to placate others at the expense of Hinduism. I think there is much in that charge. I am not in favour of performing *shuddhi*† for the sake of *shuddhi* by inducing Mussalmans or Christians to change their religions, but if a Hindu who has changed his religion wants to come back to the fold of Hinduism, I see no reason why we should not encourage him.

I wrote a letter to Benthall‡ asking him to give us paper free of charge for the Hindi *Harijan*. Probably you know that Benthall is the Managing Agent of the Titaghur Paper Mills. Benthall said that he could consider the question of advertising in the *Harijan*, but cannot present to us paper as a gift. I said we should mention in the issue of the *Harijan* that we had received paper gratis from the Titaghur Paper Mills and that this in itself would be an advertisement. But he said that this would not serve his purpose. I told him that as we did not take advertisements, it was not possible for us to advertise the Titaghur Paper Mills. The matter is now before the Board of Directors. Do you think it is possible for us to accommodate the Titaghur Paper Mills ?

I wonder what you now think of the Hindi *Harijan*. I personally think that on the whole the publication is quite satisfactory. Financially, it will take some time before it can be inde-

* Members of a caste of the depressed class.

† Reconversion.

‡ Sir Edward Benthall.

pendent. But I think it is making steady progress and in three or four months' time it will become absolutely self-supporting.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

Bapu's next letter shows his very practical turn of mind in dealing with the problem of the Calcutta slums.

Yeravada Central Prison,
28th March, 1933.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

I hope you received my letter in Hindi which I wrote the day before yesterday, *i.e.* 26th. I do think that we ought to find out a means of dealing with the bustees problem in Calcutta as a whole, and not piecemeal. When therefore you next go to Calcutta I suggest your having an informal meeting of the principal municipal councillors. No matter what vested interests have grown up, they should be attacked and the problem dealt with. From what you write to me, the cheapest method evidently seems to be to demolish these bustees. The opposition to the introduction of a more humane method of carrying night-soil seems to me to be perfectly useless. Improved methods must in the beginning stages mean more expense, but undoubtedly less in the end. The question behind all the difficulties that arise resolves itself, as a rule, into apathy on the part of those who profess their appreciation of the necessity for reform, but are not prepared to sacrifice anything for it. You must therefore turn this apathy into active sympathy, and a way out will be quickly found.

As to the Hindi *Harijan*, I wrote to you the day before yesterday telling you that the only articles that were found worth reading were yours, except the first. Your style is pleasing, simple, idiomatic. Your method of dealing with the subject is plain, direct and easily understandable. Of course the translation of my articles was faulty, but that difficulty will not be got over by sending translations ready-made from here. The Hindi will have to be polished there. This ought to reduce expense and improve the paper.

Pray do not worry about the David scheme. I just told you how I came to write about it. But I quite understand your difficulty. If it becomes necessary, we must naturally fall back upon the Central Fund. But let us for a while wait and see if we can

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get even half a dozen subscribers with the full amounts. I do not despair ; only I never get time to frame nice letters. But I will do so one of these days. When I have one or two names I propose to announce your name with these.

Yours sincerely,

BAPU

Our correspondence at this time was largely taken up with the launching of the *Harijan* and with its make-up and contents:—

31st March, 1933.

My dear Bapu,

I have your letter of the 23rd and also of the 26th March written in your own handwriting. On the 15th of April we have our annual session of the Federation. It will take two or three days. After this, about the end of April, I will go to Calcutta and get my nose operation performed. I have more or less decided to do this.

As regards sending money to the Central Board I can give you another practical suggestion. There is a Cotton Mill in Poona owned by Mr. Shivilal Motilal and if you pay the money to them they will in turn pay the same to the Central Board at Delhi.

I am taking no further interest as regards the controversy in Bengal regarding the Yeravada Pact. But I understand from Satish Babu, with whom I had a talk before I left Calcutta, that when the Poet and Acharya Ray return from their tour, he would take action if it is considered necessary at that time.

As regards the Selection Board, as Mr. Thakkar is going to see you, you will have a full talk with him. After that we shall appoint a Board according to your desire.

Yours affectionately,

GHANSHYAMDAS

31st March, 1933.

My dear Bapu,

I have already read your suggestion about the Hindi *Harijan*. I personally feel that it is making steady progress, so far as the quality is concerned. Financially also, I hope that in course of time, it will be self-supporting. The position, just now, financially is something like this :

We are selling only about 1,000 copies. But if we can sell 2,500 copies, we shall become self-supporting. The cost per issue for 12 pages and for 2,500 copies would be as follows :—

Printing charges	Rs. 45
Paper charges	Rs. 33
Folding	Rs. 5
Postage, railway, etc.	Rs. 28

Roughly it would come to Rs. 480/- per month. The salaries of staff, etc., would come to about Rs. 160/- per month. Thus on 2,500 copies we incur an expenditure of Rs. 640/- per month.

If we can sell all the 2,500 copies, half of them to the subscribers and the other half to agents, we shall get on an average Rs. 3 per copy which would mean Rs. 7,500/- per year. I do not think, it should be difficult to get a sale of 2,500 copies. The paper is not sufficiently advertised, and I have written a number of letters to some of my personal friends to push the sales, but I am not sure how far they are going to succeed. We are sending a travelling agent to secure subscribers and I hope that this may bring us a good number. I wonder whether you feel so satisfied with the quality of the paper as to enable you to issue a public appeal in favour of it. So far as I can compare it with the Gujarati issue, I would not say that it is much inferior to it. I wish you to look through the 6th issue, that is of the 31st March. You will see from this that except for two articles from Mr. Thakkar, one from Mr. Kalelkar and notes from the editor, all the other articles are your own. Mr. Thakkar's article on page 10 is, I think, good. Mr. Kalelkar's article is not bad enough to have been omitted. Besides this, almost all the articles are yours. My only complaint, just now, is about the translation. I do not like the literal translation made by Hariji from English and I have told him to use, as far as possible, pure Hindi idioms instead of literally translating English idioms. I hope you will approve of this. The translations made by Mahadevbhai* too, I must confess, are equally bad. Besides, I do not want you to take an unnecessary burden on yourself. Please leave the translation to Viyogiji and let us see how far we succeed. I would, however, wish you, if you desire to translate some of the articles yourself, not to translate literally but to write independent articles on the same line. That would make better reading. For instance, your

* Mahadev Desai, Gandhiji's devoted Secretary.

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translation, which is not a literal translation, published on page 8 of the issue of the 31st March reads very much better than some of the translations made by Mahadevbhai. Similarly, your translation from Gujarati printed on page 3 is also a beautiful translation. The others are not good. I would, therefore, submit that you should send us either the original articles or independent translations. If you desire, you may leave the literal translations either from Gujarati or from English to us. Leaving aside the defects in the translation, I personally feel that the issue of the 31st March has come up very nearly to standard, and I should like to hear from you whether you agree with me or differ. In case you differ, I should like to have some definite criticism from you.

For the future my suggestion is, and this I have said also to Viyogiji, that we should have a 12-page paper printed with smaller type. As regards the matter, almost all your articles, either originals or translation, should be there. A note or two, not taking more than two columns, should be written by the editor. If we get your original articles, they should occupy the editorial page. Besides this, we should give weekly reports and if we can also get some good Puranic stories from such books as Bhakta Mal etc., we might employ a page or two for this purpose. I hope you will like my suggestion ; if not, please let me have yours. I hope you will also approve of our issuing a 12-page paper although we can reduce the same to 8 pages. But, I think, there is enough material for a 12-page paper, and we therefore need not curtail the size. The reports appearing so far are not very important, and for this I am drawing the attention of the Provincial Boards.

I am enclosing herewith a cutting from *Patit Bandhu*. This will give you an idea as to what sort of stories we want to put in.

I wonder whether you would care to send a copy of the English issue of the *Harijan* to the Private Secretary to the Governor of Bengal.† You know my views about him. He is a good man and genuinely wants to understand you. I will pay the cost and if you will agree with me, a copy will be sent to the Private Secretary every Friday. A letter may also be sent to the Private Secretary saying that the copy is meant for His Excellency the Governor.

† Sir John Anderson, now Lord Waverley.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE MAHATMA

I am going to Gwalior tomorrow and will return after ten or twelve days.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

10th April, 1933.

My dear Bapu,

I have your letter of the 28th March. As regards the Calcutta work, I myself feel that we will have to do something and when I go back to Calcutta, I shall certainly take up the question. The difficulties are there, and it is not so easy to achieve success. But in any case we will have to do our real best and I shall certainly take up the question in right earnest.

You have not yet written to me whether we can accept advertisement from the Titaghur Paper Mill. Benthall is prepared to give us advertisement, but not paper free of charge.

I received Rs. 3,000 from Lala Kamalapatji of Cawnpore. He wants to spend the money for scholarships. I have written to Mr. Kunzru asking him how he would like to spend the money. In case he is prepared to spend it for Mr. David's scheme, we can count on another Rs. 3,000. In any case the money will have to be spent in the U.P.

Though there are other institutions too which are working quietly. I happened to preside over the prize distribution ceremony of an untouchable school for girls. The workers made a good impression on me about their activities. I have asked them to prepare a list of all their activities. If we are satisfied, I think the Board should give some sort of grant-in-aid to such institutions.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

11th April, 1933.

My dear Bapu,

I have your letter of the 3rd/4th April. As regards sending a copy of the *Harijan* to the Private Secretary to His Excellency the Governor of Bengal, I understand your reasoning. If I have understood it right, then I, as the President, would be acting quite properly in sending the paper to any of my acquaintances. I would, therefore, suggest that one copy each of the *Harijan* may be sent to the following persons at my expense :

- (1) Private Secretary to H. E. the Governor of Bengal.

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- (2) Sir Edward Benthall, Calcutta.
- (3) Sir Walter Layton, c/o The Economist, London.
- (4) Sir Henry Strakosh, India Office, London.
- (5) Lord Reading, London.
- (6) Lord Lothian, London.

I will be going to Delhi tomorrow for three or four days and then I will come here again and wait for my father who has asked me to stay here until he comes from Nasik where he is staying just now. My father will be coming here about the first week of May on his way to Hardwar. After seeing him off, I will proceed straight to Calcutta and I propose to stay there for at least two months.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

CHAPTER IX

MORE ABOUT THE HARIJANS

BAPU'S exit from prison in 1933 gave a new stimulus to our work for the Harijans.

29th April, 1933.

My dear Bapu,

As you will see from this letter, I am now at Gwalior waiting for my father. He is expected here on the 3rd of next month and after that I will go to Hardwar. After seeing him off, I propose to go to Calcutta, where I expect to arrive about the 7th or 8th of May.

As regards the Hindi *Harijan* I could not agree with Viyogiji that it will be self-supporting within a short time. I hope, however, that it will certainly be self-supporting in course of time. Every day we are getting new subscribers.

As regards my writing in the *Harijan*, unfortunately I cannot write unless I feel like writing ; but I have been helping in the translation. In the last issue of the *Harijan* the translation of your article about the letter of Andrews was done substantially by me or with my help. I will, however, try to write articles again from Calcutta. Probably I will use the paper for Calcutta bustee reform propaganda.

I am glad that my father paid a visit to you. I do not know how he impressed you with his limited education and way of expression. But he is very good at heart and has a great regard for you. He himself, although staunchly orthodox, appreciates your views and in his own ways carries on propaganda in your favour.

Yes, immediately after I reach Calcutta, I will undergo the operation. As you will remember, in Poona and Bombay the doctors recommended that I should have my septum removed, which is now deviated. The Calcutta specialist has been telling me that it is not the septum correction which is urgently required but a permanent drainage in the antrum. In America they told me to get both done. I will, therefore, have, first of all, a permanent drainage performed and if it does not give me any relief, then I will also have to undergo the second operation.

MORE ABOUT THE HARIJANS

My daughter-in-law tried Dr. Mehta's treatment but she had not sufficient patience to continue it for more than 20 days. My son and daughter-in-law have both now left for Mahabaleshwar.

Mahadevbhai enquires whether I should be charged for the copies of the English *Harijan* which are sent to Lord Reading and Lord Lothian. I think this is immaterial and does not matter, in my opinion, one way or the other. If in order to help the paper it is necessary that I should be charged, you may instruct Mr. Shastri to do so.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

12th August, 1933.

My dear Bapu,

I have not heard anything from you so far. But I hope you will have no difficulty in getting this letter.

We have been sending material for the English *Harijan*. We miss your articles very badly, but somehow or other we are managing things. I have got a leather expert to write something about tanning and curing which I hope may be of some interest to readers. We shall be able to continue like this, but we cannot make the paper very bright without receiving contributions from you.

Thakkar Bapa has gone on tour and he is expected here about the 18th of this month.

Since I have come here, I have taken up the question of starting a leather school and also a mixed boarding house, particularly for the Harijan boys. I am searching for a good plot of land and I hope that within a few weeks we shall be able to make a beginning. Please let me have your suggestions if you have any in this connection. According to my estimate the cost of land would be about Rs. 5,000 and I propose to spend another Rs. 5,000 on building. This I propose to do out of the funds of the Society. Of course we shall take formal permission from the members. But I take it that we have your sanction to proceed. As regards the leather school, I propose to bear the recurring charges myself at least for one year.

Lakshmi is as happy and comfortable as it is possible to be. I am keeping quite fit and I hope you and Mahadevbhai are quite comfortable.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

‘Satyagraha Ashram’,
Wardha, *Sept. 30, 1933.*

Dear Ghanshyamdas,

As you are aware, the ‘Satyagraha Ashram’ grounds with the buildings in Sabarmati were abandoned on the 1st of August last by the Ashram people. I had expected that the Government would, in view of my letter addressed to them, take charge of this abandoned property, but they did not do so. It then became a question with me as to what my duty was in the circumstances. I felt that it was altogether wrong to allow the valuable buildings and the equally valuable crops and trees to lie neglected and run to waste. I consulted friends and co-workers and came to the conclusion that the best use to make of the Ashram was to dedicate it once for all to the service of the Harijans. I placed my proposal before those trustees of the Ashram who are available, and also fellow members. They have, I am happy to say, wholeheartedly approved of my idea. When the property was abandoned there certainly was the expectation that some day, whether through an honourable settlement or through India coming into her own, the trustees would resume possession. Under the new proposal, the trustees divest themselves entirely of the property. The procedure is permissible under the trust deed, service of the Harijans being one of the objects of the trust. Therefore, the new proposal is wholly in keeping with the letter and spirit of the constitution of the Ashram as also of the trust.

The question that the trustees and I had to consider was to whom the property was to be transferred for the specific use I have mentioned; and we unanimously came to the conclusion that it should be transferred to the All-India Harijan organisation for all-India use. The objects of the trust are : (i) to settle on the Ashram ground approved Harijan families subject to regulations to be framed ; (ii) to open a hostel for Harijan boys and girls with liberty to take non-Harijans ; (iii) to conduct a technological department for teaching the art of skinning, tanning the hide so obtained, curing it and manufacturing leather so prepared into shoes, sandals and other articles of daily use ; and lastly, to use the premises as offices for the Central Board or the Gujarat provincial organisation or both, and such other allied uses as the Committee, referred to in the following paragraph, may think proper.

MORE ABOUT THE HARIJANS

On behalf of the trustees, I suggest that the Servants of Untouchables Society should appoint a special committee with yourself and the Secretary as *ex-officio* members, and three Ahmedabad citizens, with power to this committee to add to their number, to take over this trust and to give effect to its objects.

Two friends who have been always associated with the Ashram, viz., Syts. Budhabhai and Juthabhai, have offered to reside on the premises as honorary managers. They have private means and have been devoted to the service of the Harijans for a long time. There is also an inmate of the Ashram, who has dedicated his life to Harijan service, and who will gladly stay on the premises. He has almost become a specialist as a teacher of Harijan boys and girls. The committee, I have therefore suggested, should have no difficulty in managing the trust; nor is it necessary that all the activities I have mentioned should be simultaneously and immediately undertaken. Some Harijan families, as you are aware, are already living there. It has long been a dream of the members of the Ashram to establish a colony of Harijan families, but beyond having a few of them we were not able to make further progress. Experiments in tanning were also conducted there. Manufacture of sandals was going on up to the time of disbandment. The buildings contain a spacious hostel easily accommodating 100 boarders. It has a fairly big weaving shed and other buildings exceptionally fitted for the uses I have named. The property contains 100 acres. I venture to say, therefore, that the site is none too large for the fulfilment of the objects mentioned, but it is large enough for the response that may be reasonably expected for some time to come. I hope that the Society will have no objection in accepting the offer of the trustees and taking over the responsibility implied in the acceptance.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. GANDHI

4th October, 1933.

My dear Gandhiji,

It was so very generous of you and of the Trustees of Sabarmati Ashram to make an offer of the grounds and building of that Ashram in your letter, dated Wardha, the 30th Sept. '33, to dedicate them to the service of the Harijans' cause ; and for that purpose to hand over the same to the Servants of the Untouchables

Society. I have no hesitation in accepting the kind offer, and hope that the Society will prove itself worthy of the trust that you have reposed in it. I am accepting the offer without waiting for the opinions of the members of the Central Board, fully hoping that they will all approve of my action.

The four objects for which the property is to be used, mentioned in para. two of your letter, will constantly be kept in mind by this Society. I further hope that all of them will be undertaken without any avoidable loss of time. The services of Syts. Budhabhai and Juthabhai as well as the third gentleman (whose name is, I believe, Bhagwanji Gandhi) will be taken advantage of and I am confident that they will prove valuable helpmates. You have suggested in para. three of your letter that the Society should appoint a special committee consisting of five persons with powers to add, to take over the Trust and give effect to its objects. Besides myself and the General Secretary of this Society you suggest that three Ahmedabad citizens should be included in the committee. These three will no doubt be selected in consultation with you. May I not say that the formation of the committee of management be entirely left to this Society, who will be held wholly responsible for the fulfilment of the Trust? However, if the three Ahmedabad citizens happen to be nominated as members of the Central Board of the Society, it will then consist wholly of members and not partly of members of this Society and partly of outsiders. But this is a small point which we may be free to settle by personal discussion, if necessary.

Incidentally it will take some time before the property, together with the crops and trees standing thereon, can be taken charge of by this Society. I would, therefore, request you to ask those who are at present in charge to continue to do so and look after the estate as heretofore.

Once again, expressing to you my gratitude for your magnanimity,

Yours sincerely,
G. D. BIRLA
President

5th October, 1933.

My dear Bapu,

I had already wired to you my acceptance of your office to

transfer the Ashram to the Mandal.* I had in the beginning some doubts in my mind about our capacity to manage the Ashram from a distance. But since I know that some of your trusted men are going to reside in the Ashram and will give their whole-time service to the cause, I have no longer any uneasiness in my mind. I hope that we shall prove ourselves worthy of the trust that you have reposed in us. I have accepted the offer without waiting for the opinions of the members of the Central Board fully hoping that they will approve of the action. The four objects for which the property is to be used as mentioned in para. 2 of your letter will be constantly kept in mind by the Society.

Arising from your offer and our acceptance of the same a few points crop up which require your careful consideration. So far we have had no property except the cash lying with us in the banks. We are thinking of purchasing some land in Delhi for building a Harijan Hostel. But by the acceptance of your offer we will shortly be in possession of a valuable property. The question will thus immediately arise as to who will be the owner of this property. Will it be the Harijan Mandal? If so, then the Harijan Mandal would for all practical purposes mean the persons by whose sufferance it exists and there is no such thing as sufferance in our Society so far. Therefore, we have to decide what sort of constitution we are to have in future. In administrative work democracy creates a lot of difficulties and tends towards party factions. But at the same time where an institution is holding property worth lakhs and lakhs an out-and-out autocratic constitution is not a desirable thing. Probably the lesser of the two evils would be a restrained autocracy or a qualified democracy. I wonder whether you would like that a dozen persons devoted to the cause of the Society for life should become founder members who alone should enjoy the right to vote. The wider power now vested in the President may hereafter be transferred to the members. If that is not desirable, then I think a separate Board of Trustees may be constituted to hold the property. It should have wider powers enabling it to withdraw the property from the possession of the Harijan Board at any time, in case they found that good use of the same was not being made. The latter suggestion is to be adopted only in case we decide to have a democratic constitution. You have suggested a committee of five, three of them to

* Association.

be Ahmedabad citizens and the President and the Secretary to be *ex-officio* members. I am not quite sure whether you want this committee to act as Trustees to hold and administer the property of the Ashram, or just to act as an Advisory Body. In case they are to act as Trustees then what will be the *locus standi* of the Society, and what will be the method for the election of three Ahmedabad citizens? And besides, one cannot be quite sure what sort of a Secretary and a President will represent the Harijan Mandal on the Trust Board in case it becomes a democratic body. I hope I have expressed myself clearly as regards the difficulties likely to arise under the present constitution as also under a very democratic constitution. I want you to think over the matter carefully and let me have your suggestions. If we would not be holding any property then I feel that the present constitution is quite workable.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

‘Satyagraha Ashram’,
Wardha, Oct. 8, 1933.

My dear Ghanshyamdass,
I have your letter.

The difficulty you raise is there, and it was in anticipation of it that I suggested the formation of a board of trustees. My idea is that the property should be held by these trustees permanently, under very definite conditions, with a right even to sell. You and Thakkar Bapa should be permanent members, irrespective of what happens to the popular organization. This proposal disposes of the question from which the larger one has arisen, so that I am not prepared to discuss the issue in this letter for want of time. Meanwhile I would ask you to study the constitution of the All-India Spinners’ Association. We may postpone the discussion till we meet, and, seeing that I am here up to the 7th of November, it might be possible for you to come, even if it be for that one question.

You have referred to the proposed hostel in Delhi. In view of our possessing the Ashram ground and buildings, do you think that there is any urgency for the Delhi proposal? Should we not wait and see how the Sabarmati plan progresses before venturing upon another big scheme? I am inclined to think that we ought to concentrate our attention upon making the Sabarmati scheme a

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thorough success, and it will tax the energy of many of us to make it so.

I hope you are keeping well. What about the nose? The weather in Delhi ought to be very fine at this time of the year.

Yours' sincerely,

BAPU

'Satyagraha Ashram',

Wardha, Oct. 26, 1933.

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

I must dictate in English in answer to your letter written in Hindi.

It was not necessary to write further about the constitution of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. Whether we should immediately bring into being a semi-democratic organisation is a question for consideration. I do not know whether under the appointment there is the power, but the plan that I have suggested is feasible and can be enforced immediately, that is, to register the Ashram in the names of the trustees that I have suggested. You should discuss your idea with Thakkar Bapa and Hariji.

As to the Spinners' Association, I had an absolutely free hand, and I evolved a plan which enabled it to become an easily operating and sound organisation with immense possibility for democratisation. I wanted to write to you, as soon as the decision for the transfer of the Ashram was taken, that in view of that acquisition the ambitious plan for Delhi should be abandoned. But the hostel scheme is quite sound. Of course, we shall want many such hostels ; and I can see immense possibilities emerging from them, if they are properly managed. When I am in Delhi you may throw any work you like on to me.

So far as Biharilal is concerned, if he will serve in connection with the hostel schemes and so on, we can utilise his services. But I am very much against engaging paid preachers, Harijans or otherwise. And in this matter we cannot be too firm.

Yours sincerely,

BAPU

24-1-34.

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

There has been a tremendous change in the outlook of the people. Let us see what happens. I see God's hand in this work. This is not a mere formality. As a matter of fact this is beyond the capacity of one man, or for the matter of that,

one thousand men. But this is a thing on which not much can be written or spoken, which only means that my faith in God is increasing. I can see for myself the littleness of my own capacity.

I hope you are keeping well.

With Bapu's blessings.

I have no copy of what I wrote to Bapu about the Bihar earthquake at this time, but here is his reply:—

31-1-34.

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

Your letter. I liked the comparison between the earthquake and the Harijan problem very much, because there is truth in it. It is self-evident that those who had little to lose have lost little ; but it is also true that those who had anything to lose are now beggars. I am trying to do whatever is possible from here.

The net result of my tour in Bengal is that I am now at a loss as to what to do. It is good that you are there. I have written a long letter to Bidhan today. Read it and then decide. To me there appears to be only one decision possible ; to go, if you do not stop.

With Bapu's blessings.

Lord Halifax, whose father had just died, also wrote about the earthquake:—

Board of Education,

Whitehall, London, S.W.,

13th February, 1934.

Dear Mr. Birla,

Thank you so much for your kind letter. It was good of you to have us in your thoughts at a time which, for all who knew my father, is one of great sadness at the close of so long a chapter of happiness. But for him I can have nothing but thankfulness.

I was deeply distressed to hear of the heavy loss of life and damage caused by the Earthquake, the magnitude of which we did not at first fully appreciate owing to the breakdown of communications in the locality. The sufferers have my deepest sympathy, and I am glad to see that, as you say, everyone is co-operating to mitigate the severity of the distress.

Yours sincerely,

HALIFAX

CHAPTER X

POLITICAL INTERLUDE

BAPU was at this time anxious to meet Sir John Anderson.

12-2-34.

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

I had a talk with Miss Lester about Midnapore* and suggested an interview with the Governor. She wrote to the Governor and he sent a telegram. Now she is going there. Please read the letter I wrote to her. I have asked her to see you and learn everything. Please tell her all about it. If necessary, you can also arrange for her meeting with Dr. Bidhan Roy and Satish Babu. She will return to me on Friday. She has been given money for the journey expenses and her ticket has also been purchased. Whether these expenses should be realised from you or from Jamnalalji, I do not know which would be proper.

This has been written in great haste. I have your letters to which I shall reply, but I am not getting time.

With Bapu's blessings.

* Where the Magistrate had just been killed by terrorists.

19-2-34.

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

I got your letter. I am thinking whether to write to the Governor or not. Anyway, the practice of tribute from Midnapore has been discontinued. But he has not admitted his mistake. Miss Lester has now applied for an interview with the Viceroy. These things will not yield any result just now, but still, we should not allow any chance of a settlement to slip.

Bidhan Roy should try his best for an interview. Let the Congressmen say whatever they like.

I have postponed the idea of coming there till at least the Bihar matter is over. It will be attended to later.

I hope you will try to see Jawaharlal.

Miss Harrison will be relieved in England in March. It is altogether better she comes here. I have already written about it.

With Bapu's blessings.

Patna, 13-3-34.

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

Enclosed is a copy of a letter written to Sir Samuel [Hoare]. As for Sir Samuel, I would like you to do something for me. If Scarpa* is there, find out from him as to what took place at the meeting because he was present there. Even if he was not there, the meeting was arranged through him. It would be better if the names of those who took part in the meeting are also given. I want to accumulate all the facts relating to this matter. So far everything in this connection is being conducted through the medium of English, and it is all a snare. It reminds me of the anecdotes of rendering *Ajmer* as *Aj mara* [died today].

You wish to come down to see me. I shall call you later in connection with the Harijan work. I have allowed Thakkar Bapa to go to Delhi, as he was not needed here ; though a worker of his stamp can be of use in any work. The fact is that he was not particularly needed. But if you want to come in connection with Bihar or about the correspondence exchanged lately with Sir Samuel Hoare, you can do so whenever you like. I shall be in the Motihari area from Wednesday till Friday, returning in the evening of Friday.

Agatha Harrison will be reaching Bombay on the 16th. Lester has seen the Viceroy. She will be arriving here tomorrow.

With Bapu's blessings.

* Dr. Scarpa was the Italian Consul General in Calcutta in 1931. He was in Rome when Bapu was there.

The letter to Sir Samuel Hoare concerned a 'fake' interview with Bapu published in an Italian paper, and reported by *The Times* correspondent in Rome:—

As at Wardha, (C.P.) India,
January, 1934.

Dear Sir Samuel,

You will recollect that whilst I was returning to India in the December of 1931 you had a cable sent to me in regard to an interview alleged to have been given by me to a journalist in Rome, and that I sent a categorical denial. To this there was a counter denial which I had not seen till recently, being in gaol within less than one week of my landing in Bombay.

After my discharge from the last imprisonment in August last I was told by Miraben Slade that an English friend—Prof. Maclean of Wilson College, Bombay—had thought that although the matter was stale, it was worth while my clearing it up, as the denial by the Rome journalist had created a profound impression at the time of its publication and had probably precipitated the Viceregal action against me in 1932. Agreeing with Prof. Maclean, I at once asked Miraben to write to Miss Agatha Harrison to procure the relevant newspaper cuttings. After much search she was able to get them. The last and the most important I received from her last month in the midst of my hurricane tour in the cause of the anti-untouchability campaign. For ready reference, I send you copies of the three cuttings marked A, B and C, respectively.’*

It should be noted that these cuttings were for the first time seen by me on their being received from Miss Harrison. I have now read and re-read them several times, and I have no hesitation in saying that A and C are a caricature of what took place. A professes to be a summary of a long statement said to have been made by me to an Italian journalist. In C *The Times* correspondent, on seeing my denial regarding the alleged interview, makes a halting admission that I might be correct in so far as Signor Gayda did not ‘request any formal interview and no such interview was granted,’ but insists that the statements attributed to me were substantially correct. But truth will perhaps be better served by my simply stating what I do know than by analysing A and C.

1. I never made any statement, much less a long one, to Signor Gayda as suggested in A.

2. I was never invited to meet Signor Gayda at any place. But I was invited by an Italian friend to meet some Italian citizens at an informal drawing-room meeting at a private house. At this meeting I was introduced to several friends whose names I cannot now recall and could not have recalled even the day after the meeting. The introductions were merely formal.

3. At this meeting the conversation was general, and not addressed to any particular individual. Questions were put by several friends and there was a random conversation as at all drawing-room meetings.

* A and C are reproduced on pages 133 and 134.

4. It was therefore wrong for Signor Gayda or *The Times* correspondent to reproduce my remarks, as if they were a connected statement to one particular person.

5. Signor Gayda never showed to me for verification anything he might have taken down.

6. The conversation, among other things, referred to the Round Table Conference, my impression of it and my possible future action. Many of the things that have been put into my mouth in A, I had never said. All my hopes, fears and future intentions were expressed in as precise a language as it was possible for me to command and use in my speech at the close of the Round Table Conference. Whatever I said in private conversation was but a paraphrase of the sentiments expressed in that speech. I am not given to saying one thing in public and another in private, or to saying one thing to one friend and something else to another. I could not have said that there was a definite rupture between the Indian nation and the British Government, for I had said to several friends about the same time that I was determined to strain every nerve to prevent a rupture and to continue the peaceful relations established by the Irwin-Gandhi Pact. Being an optimist, I do not believe in a final rupture between human beings.

7. I never said that I was returning to India in order to restart the struggle against England. Certain possibilities about which I was questioned at the informal meeting have been so described in A as if I was actually going to India to bring them about, if I could.

I would add that the public had neither the original notes supposed to have been made by Signor Gayda nor the latter's own version wherever published. In A and C they had only the impressions of *The Times* correspondent about what Signor Gayda wrote or said.

I do not know how you were affected by C. If your faith in my denial was shaken, perhaps in any case, I should have been acquainted with the rejoinder to my denial as you had kindly brought to my notice the first report. I do not know how you will react to this letter. If you have any doubts about my *bona fides*, I should like to clear them, if it is at all possible for me to do so.

POLITICAL INTERLUDE

Miss Slade was the 'follower' referred to in C. I enclose herewith her recollections of the conversation.

I am not publishing this letter. I am sending copies to several friends for their private use. But I would like you, if you could, to give it publicity, or to ask Prof. C. F. Andrews, Woodbrooke, Selly Oak, Birmingham, to make such public use of the letter as he might wish.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. GANDHI

'A'

Extract from *The Times*

A NEW TRADE BOYCOTT

From our own Correspondent

Rome, December, 14th.

Mr. Gandhi, who had refused to make any statements to many journalists, both Italian and foreign, who had been invited to meet him, has now made a long statement to Signor Gayda of the *Giornale d'Italia*.

Mr. Gandhi said that the Round Table Conference, which 'marked the definite rupture of relations between the Indian nation and the British Government,' had been for Indians a long and slow agony. It had, however, served to make quite clear to the British authorities the spirit of the Indian nation and its leaders and to ask the true intentions of England. He was returning to India in order to restart at once his struggle against England, which was to take the form of passive resistance and the boycott of British goods. He considered that the boycott would now prove a powerful means of rendering more acute the British crisis, already difficult through the devaluation of the currency and unemployment. The closing of the Indian market to all British products would signify substantially a reduction of English industrial activity, an increase of unemployment, and a new depreciation of the pound.

Mr. Gandhi concluded his remarks by lamenting that few European countries had hitherto shown interest in the Indian problem. That was a pity, since an independent and prosperous India would mean a richer market for the products of other nations, and Indian freedom would be manifested through commercial and intellectual exchanges with all countries.

‘C’

(Extract from *The Times*)

21st Dec. 1931.

Mr. Gandhi has authorised a complete denial of an interview he is reported to have given to the *Giornale d'Italia* during his brief stay in Rome, and which was summarised in *The Times* of December 15. The statements attributed to him went so much further in respect of the prospect of restarting civil disobedience in India than any previous utterance that it was felt necessary to ascertain precisely what he said. Accordingly a telegram was sent from an authoritative quarter to Mr. Gandhi on board the Italian liner *Pilsna* in the Mediterranean in the following terms :—

Press reports state that, on embarkation, you issued to *Giornale d'Italia* a statement which contained expressions such as following :—

(1) Round Table Conference marked definite rupture of relations between Indian nation and British Government.

(2) You are returning to India in order to restart at once struggle against England.

(3) Boycott would now prove powerful means of rendering more acute British crisis.

(4) We will not pay taxes, we will not work for England in any way, we will completely isolate British authorities, their politics and their institutions, and we will totally boycott all British goods.

Some of your friends here think you must have been misreported, and, if so, denial desirable.

The following telegraphic reply was received from Mr. Gandhi yesterday :—

Giornale D'Italia statement is wholly false. I never gave any interview to Pressmen at Rome. Last interview I gave was to *Reuter* at Villeneuve in Switzerland, where I asked the people of India not to come to a hasty decision but to await my statement. I shall take no precipitate action but shall make ample previous entreaty to the authorities should direct action become unfortunately necessary. Please give this statement the widest publicity possible.

Signor Gayda has resolutely refused to accept Mr. Gandhi's denial of the statements attributed to him in the *Giornale d'Italia*. In a laconic note Signor Gayda has declared that the words attri-

buted by him to the Mahatma were written in his presence as he spoke them and in the presence of other witnesses. So far as I understand the facts of the case, the *dementi* of Mr. Gandhi may be correct in so far as Signor Gayda did not request a formal 'interview' and no such 'interview' was granted.

According to information given to me, Signor Gayda was introduced to the Mahatma in a private house, and it was made perfectly clear to Mr. Gandhi who Signor Gayda was. When Mr. Gandhi began to make the remarkable statements attributed to him, Signor Gayda, realising their interest and anxious to make no mistake, asked for a pencil and paper, which were given to him. Signor Gayda then wrote down the statements of Mr. Gandhi there and then in his presence and in that of a follower, without any word being spoken by either of them that the remarks were not for publication.

It would appear, therefore, from the version I have received, that so far as the substance of the remarks is concerned, Signor Gayda, who, as I personally can testify, understands English quite well, took down the utterances of the Mahatma with particular care.

Miraben's Statement

My recollection of the occasion, which occurred now 2 years and 5 months ago, is as follows :—

Gandhiji with his companions was invited to an informal gathering at the house of an Italian Countess in Rome, friend of the Italian Consul, Bombay (then in Rome). It was a long visit consisting of a drawingroom talk followed by light refreshments and further general conversation. During the beginning of the visit I was the only member of our party with Gandhiji, the others dropping in later one after another. I was with Gandhiji during the whole visit except for 15 or 20 minutes near the end of the time when I went into the dining room to prepare some fruit, etc., for Gandhiji and to take some refreshment myself.

During the talk, as far as I can now remember, the conversation was to begin with somewhat social and varied. The Countess was busy introducing people to Gandhiji and leading off conversations on various topics. As the talk warmed up two or three gentlemen from amongst the group became conspicuous by their persistent questioning on the political and economic situation, and

I remember one of them asking for a pencil and paper and beginning to make notes. After a little the rest of our company began to turn up and we soon moved into a bigger room next the dining room. Here the conversation again became general except for a little serious talk of Gandhiji with someone, the particulars of which I cannot now remember.

I heard every word that Gandhiji uttered except for the few minutes I had gone out. He was giving his usual replies to political and economic questions with rather extra force and plainness of language because of the difficulty the Italian gentleman felt in understanding English and because of the persistence of the questioners. If Gandhiji had said some of the things attributed to him by *The Times* correspondent, I should have been dumbfounded. It would have meant that he had thrown his ideas and beliefs to the winds, and I could no longer have looked on him as my guide and father.

MIRA [Miss Slade]

The Swaraj Parliamentary party which had 'walked out' of the Central Legislature some years earlier was formed again in 1934. I was uneasy about its relations with the Congress, and wrote to Bapu, who was in Assam :—

14th April, 1934.

My dear Bapu,

As you are inviting an informal meeting of the Working Committee and later on a formal meeting of the A.I.C.C., I thought I may put in my views about the formation of the Swaraj Party. So far as your two interviews go, I have nothing to say. Somehow or other, I always agree with you and therefore please do not think that I am lacking in reasoning powers. After all, what am I to say if you are always correct? Now about the Swaraj Party. Since Dr. Ansari, Bhulabhai and Dr. Roy have announced the formation of the new party, Pandit Malaviyaji seems to be very upset. He is not quite sure what attitude he would take at the time of election. You know, he holds strong views about the Communal Award, and the Hindu Sabhaites who are eager to go to the Assembly have already begun to exploit him. There is a danger of another party being formed under the leadership of Pandit Malaviya if the situation is not handled tactfully and

POLITICAL INTERLUDE

in time. About the communal question Panditji is sailing between the Congress and the Hindu Sabha. He agrees with none. He would like to have an amicable settlement and yet is not prepared reasonably to satisfy the Mohammadans. At present he insists that the Communal Award should be wrecked, which of course is an impossible job. He says that the Muslims may have 33 per cent in the Assembly and also 51 per cent in Bengal, but then he wants the rest of the seats to go to Hindus and not to be divided between the Hindus and the Europeans. There is much reason in what he says. But this method of operation would not appeal to you. He wants to canvass Muslim support in his favour, which he will never get, and also wants to lead a deputation to the Viceroy and to the Cabinet which can never bear fruit. I do not know what would be the creed of the Swaraj Party as regards communal matters. But I think it is possible to reconcile Panditji's views with that of the Swaraj Party if it gives freedom to its members to fight against the Communal Award in their own way. If this is not done it is likely to cause a serious split among the nationalist Hindus, a thing to be avoided. All that Panditji wants is that the newly formed Swaraj Party should not show any attachment to the Communal Award.

The next point is about the control of the Party. I agree with Panditji that either the Congress should have full control over the party or take no interest in it. There should be no half-way house. Because if men like . . . are allowed full mastery without the Congress exercising any control and yet giving the party its blessings then the Congress will be shirking its responsibility. This will cause a weakening of the party and may create corruption among the rank and file and may thus also discredit the Congress. I see very serious danger ahead based on my past experience of the Swaraj Party. And now we have no Motilal. Some control by the Congress, even though party administration may be in the hands of the party leaders, is essential. If, on the other hand, the Congress does not desire to keep control, then it is no use its giving its blessings to the Swaraj Party. You have to be clear on this point. I would certainly prefer control by the Congress.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

Gandhiji gave his opinion about this, and also referred to the Communal Award in an April letter not otherwise dated:—

Dibrugarh, *April, 1934.*

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

The Award affair is very difficult, indeed. Something is possible if the Muslims accept the way out suggested by me. Even if they do not do so, the path is straight enough. I am afraid, however, that the Swarajists will not like it. I do not find the atmosphere favourable for the success of Hindu-Muslim-Sikh unity work.

I have made an independent study of the Council-entry question. It appears to me that there will always be a party within the Congress wedded to the idea of Council-entry. The reins of the Congress should be in the hands of that group, and that group alone needs the name of the Congress. I have accepted this for all time. They will also boycott the legislatures whenever they deem it to be necessary.

There are many difficulties connected with Council-entry. Things will continue to be judged, mistakes committed, and drawbacks removed. In fact things will continue to move even if mistakes are allowed to remain unrectified.

I like Ranchi better than Calcutta. It is different even if people do not enjoy as many amenities at Ranchi as are available in Calcutta. The peace available at Ranchi is not to be dreamt of in Calcutta. I have left it to Rajendra Babu.

I shall go through your Federation speech and communicate to you my reactions.

If there is a meeting at Ranchi and it is convenient for you to come, please do come. Maybe it will be to the good. But I cannot say definitely.

With Bapu's blessings.

I now decided to write to Lord Halifax:—

23rd April, 1934.

Dear Lord Halifax,

I write this with great diffidence. But the inclination was too strong to be resisted.

More than three years back for the first time in the history of India two big men met, each representing his own country, and

brought India and England closer than before. In taking the initiative your Lordship set an example to both countries, that through mutual understanding and negotiations alone lay the road to peace and goodwill. The subsequent history is very tragic: But I am told that a provincial Governor recently remarked to a friend of mine that Gandhi carried out his obligation one hundred per cent under the 'solemn pact'.

Be that as it may. The present position is most unhappy and intolerable. Not only is there more bitterness and greater lack of faith in British pledges than was ever before manifested ; but what is worse is that the only method of peace, that is, the way of mutual understanding and human contact, is thrown overboard once for all. The old man is represented sometimes as an unpractical and unconstructive visionary and at others as a dishonest, astute and insincere politician. He cannot be both and you know what he is. There is no desire to understand him. There is horror against human contact. When Gandhiji said to Lord Willingdon in a recent letter which I have seen, 'Believe me when I say that I am yours and England's true friend,' he meant it. He did not stand on prestige but unconditionally offered co-operation in reconstructing Bihar province, proving thereby that though a staunch non-co-operator, as he calls himself, he is the best co-operator. He has also now withdrawn the Civil Disobedience movement, earning the displeasure of the Left Wing of the Congress. I have not the slightest doubt that this course will be approved by the Congress. His influence over the country and the Congress is today even more than ever before.

But what next? To my mind a better mutual understanding more than a better constitution is the greater requirement of the day. A constitution prepared in an atmosphere of distrust can never succeed. On the other hand, a mutual understanding can itself lead spontaneously to a satisfactory solution of the constitutional tangle. I go further and maintain that this is the only method even to persuade the Churchills to see that in trusting India they are not jeopardising the best interest of England. Every well-wisher of England and India thus for the time being can only have one mission at heart, that is, of establishing mutual appreciation between leaders in the two countries. You were, Sir, the first to recognise this essential truth, and today the need for realisation of this simple truth is greater than before—and may I submit

that those who on this side of the sea believe in this expect your active help? During all these days of distress those who still greatly admire your Lordship have one question on their lips : 'What is Lord Irwin doing?' I know the keen interest you still take in our affairs. But if I am allowed, I may say that India needs your help much more than what you unstintedly gave in the past. You set an example in 1931, but it has not been fully pursued. I still feel that this course is the only hope for both countries and I appeal to you to pursue the course initiated in 1931. In the present atmosphere success may be distant, but that is no reason for giving up good efforts.

Please allow me to be excused for this lengthy letter. My only justification is my attachment to Gandhiji, admiration for you and my love for my country.

Yours sincerely,
G. D. BIRLA

He replied in most reassuring terms :—

88, Eaton Square, London, S.W.1,
11th May, 1934.

Dear Mr. Birla,

I got your letter a few days ago, and I wish to write and thank you for it. I think you may rest assured that I shall not cease to do everything that I can, in circumstances that are not too easy, to assist in the task of winning through to better understanding on all sides of the matters that make for India's contentment and peace, and I have never lost my faith that with the efforts on the part of all those who wish for this end the great task will be accomplished. So you may feel certain that anything I can do will be gladly done. I have always felt that the present situation is one demanding great patience on all sides, and a readiness to see through our present difficulties in the light of the larger hope.

Yours sincerely,
HALIFAX

I close this chapter with a letter I received from Bapu which shows again his reliance on me for help in the financing of his work, in this case the establishment of cottage industries as a means of uplifting the economic condition of the lower classes.

Wardha, 29-11-34.

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

I am in receipt of your letter.

How can I say what my needs are? When there is a question of 100/-, 200/-, 1,000/-, or 2,000/-, I ask for and get it from you. But the work of cottage industries is a vast undertaking, and by taking it in hand I have added manifold to my requirements. Therefore, the only thing I can say is that whatever is left over after you have made other necessary donations, can be given to me.

I am experiencing some difficulty in forming a Board for cottage industries. The Board I want to form will have not less than three and not more than ten members. I want only such men on the Board who have complete faith in its aims and objects and who are able to give almost the whole of their time. This work is causing me a headache; I hope you are mindful of it.

Utmanzai is Khan Saheb's own village. It has been my ambition for a long time to stay there for a while. I sent a letter to Delhi on Thursday, in which I have explained the reason of my going there, enquiring if there is any harm in my touring the Frontier area. Let us see what reply comes through.

What time has been fixed for the operation?

With Bapu's blessings.

CHAPTER XI

THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA BILL

THE passage of the Government of India Bill through the House of Commons was naturally closely watched in India. It fell short of independence, but Gandhiji, who was concentrating on his Harijan Movement as a necessary accompaniment of advance towards independence, realised that the Bill was capable of producing benefit, if worked in the right spirit. Some Congressmen, on the other hand, saw nothing good in it and held that it should be pilloried as worse than the Montagu Act. Now that India has complete independence, we Indians can afford to review the past in a more dispassionate spirit and recognise that it did contain seeds which were to germinate, blossom and bear fruit giving us ultimately the full independence that we aspired for. We have embodied large portions of the Act, as finally passed, in the Constitution which we have framed ourselves which shows that in it was cast the pattern of our future plans.

Calcutta, *14th December, 1934.*

My dear Mahadevbhai,

I had a long talk with Arthur Moore yesterday at my house lasting for about two and a half hours. Mr. Muggeridge, the new man, came with him. The topic of the conversation from the beginning to the end was Bapu. He casually asked my opinion on the report when I pointed out that it was more the prevailing atmosphere than the contents of the report which in my opinion mattered most, and I strongly criticised the lack of personal contact. He agreed, but said that everyone in the Government feared that any contact with Mr. Gandhi might arouse all sorts of speculation. He is going to tell the Viceroy everything that I said to him. He said that the British community was getting warmer towards Mr. Gandhi. He had a talk only yesterday with the Viceroy who asked him what Bapu's motive was in publishing the correspondence about the Frontier. Moore replied that Bapu's motive was sincere, and that he had no desire to preach

civil disobedience to the Frontier village folk. He said that the Viceroy might have agreed with his views, but he added that there was another school of thought which believed that Mr. Gandhi was difficult to understand and that his ways were subtle. Many thought he was waiting for another opportunity to launch a movement against the Government. He added that in his second letter to the Viceroy, he, Bapu, should not have uttered a threat of disobedience. From what I have learnt, it appears that a lot of misunderstanding prevails which requires to be removed ; and it will be removed, though, of course, it will take some time. It is reported that Cunningham, who knows Bapu, and who is now the Governor of the Frontier Province, feels that Bapu's visit may cause great excitement and thus may embarrass the administration. Moore told me that the Bengal Governor was very keen on seeing Bapu, but somehow or other the interview could not come about. He asked me whether Bapu was coming again to Calcutta, implying thereby that if he did, he would try to fix up an interview. I said Bapu had nothing to do in Bengal and so was not coming unless the authorities desired to see him.

I think the ban against him is partly due to a feeling of suspicion and partly due to the resultant embarrassment which his visit may cause. I think it is very essential that this suspicion should be removed and I hope it will be removed. I also learn that Willingdon entertains more suspicion against Bapu than hostility. It is naturally difficult for them to understand the true philosophy of *Satyagrah*. Moore said that the only *Satyagrah* was the fast of Bapu but the other actions were more akin to violence than to *Satyagrah*. Of course, he was exaggerating but it cannot be said that the masses performed anything even approaching pure *Satyagrah*.

Somehow or other, I find that these men do not take to Andrews and such with much kindness. They have no opinion of their intelligence and unfortunately have a sort of prejudice which I had not discovered until now.

Yours sincerely,
GHANSHYAMDAS

1st February, 1935.

My dear Bapu,

Immediately after you left, I heard from the Home Member*

* Sir Henry Craik.

and the Viceroy*, and the enclosure is the report of my interview with them. I am not good at pen pictures, especially in English, and so am not sure whether this will give you a correct impression. But I will supplement it by saying that with the Home Member, I did most of the talking, while with the Viceroy, the latter did most. The Home Member was very cordial. Although not a clever man, he appeared to me to be very straight and frank. He has no prejudice against anyone and I would not call him anti-Indian in any sense. He may be called an administrator if that conveys a sense of die-hardism but if he is so, he is quite honest. On the other hand, the Viceroy was a little more critical this time. He has genuinely felt hurt by Congressmen abstaining from writing their names [in the Visitors' Book] and I wonder whether Bhulabhai should not reconsider the position in respect of himself apart from the other Congress M.L.A.s. I wonder whether Bhulabhai should not assure the Private Secretary that no personal insult was meant and, if necessary, this should be followed by his writing the name, simply for the reason that it was treated as an insult. I may have a further talk with the Governor of Bengal and after that, I will leave things to take their own course. Write to me what you think of it. It is good that the Home Member will meet Vallabhbhai at any rate.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

* Lord Willingdon.

15th February, 1935.

My dear Bapu,

The enclosure contains copies of a letter from Sir Samuel Hoare, my reply to it and the notes of my interview with the Governor of Bengal. The Governor now tells me definitely that there will be some overture for establishing some point of agreement after the Bill is passed. You had also said that if they did anything, it would be after the passage of the Bill. It is useless to make any conjectures as to what they would do. But for the time being, it is quite satisfactory to learn that they have a plan. The letter from Sir Samuel Hoare is equally frank and cordial but evidently he does not want to say more than what the circumstances permit. He may bear in mind what the Governor tells me. To enter into a pact after the Bill is passed would be a

difficult job for Congressmen, but let us hope that your resourcefulness will be able to help at the proper time. Please tell me your own reading after this and also any instructions you have for me.

There will be probably another meeting between Vallabhbhai and Sir Henry Craik either at my house or at some other place. As the Home Member expressed a desire that he should be informed about Vallabhbhai's arrival, Bhulabhai is going to speak to him tomorrow and fix up a time if the latter expresses a desire to talk.

With reference to your feeling as to whether you should or should not write to the Home Member, I think it is no use writing anything until the matter ends one way or the other. There is no question just now of Bhulabhai signing his name in the Visitors' Book but if at any time the other side definitely said that this was the only obstacle in the way, then, I am told, there would be no difficulty. When the atmosphere changes, this petty thing will cease to assume any importance.

I still stick to my view that it is not correct to say that the proposed constitution is worse than the Montagu Reforms. Of course, this Bill could be made worse, even tyrannical, but it could as well be made better, and far better, than the existing position, and I would therefore ask you to keep an open mind about the truce. If they make no agreement with you, then, of course, the proposal stands condemned. But until then, do not you think you should keep an open mind about it?

Now, what about my going? After the talk with the Governor, I am inclined to go. But the last word rests with you.

Rajendra Babu has evolved a formula for the communal settlement. It is based on joint electorates and no change in the seats, and the franchise is to be differential so as to reflect a correct proportion of the two communities in the constituencies. He is in close touch with me, and I have advised him to get Mr. Ramanand Chatterjee and Mr. J. N. Basu here to talk about Bengal rather than go to Calcutta. I fear the atmosphere in Bengal is not good and so it is better to keep the venue in Delhi but the real difficulty would be about the Sikhs. Hindus even in the Punjab may be reconciled. But it is a hard job. Pandit Malaviyaji, I fear, will not be helpful, as usual!

If in any thing you feel that I have made a mistake, please correct me. I am only an amateur in this line but I hope I know your views and reasoning fully well.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

Pandit Malaviya was naturally very interested in the Bill and had very decided views of his own about the franchise in relation to the Hindu-Moslem question. His strict Hindu orthodoxy and attachment to the caste system led him to disapprove of Gandhiji's battle for the Harijans and caused other difficulties, to which I alluded in a letter for Gandhiji addressed to Mahadev Desai on the 27th February:—

27th February, 1935.

Panditji left today. As usual, he neither agrees with the rank communalists nor with the Jinnah-Rajendra Prasad formula. He has given me a number of suggestions but it is no use discussing them since I know that Jinnah is not prepared to go beyond the formula. I think eventually we will have to resort to a Congress-League agreement. It is more than probable now that Panditji will go to England. In fact, before leaving for Bombay he informed me definitely that he is leaving on the 15th March.

I had to pass through an embarrassing time these days. Panditji every day pressed the point about the policy of the *Hindustan Times* and went to the extent of saying that I should leave the paper entirely in his hands. He even suggested that if I disliked his policy, I could resign. I could not accept his suggestions because it was not a question of merely my resignation. Parasnath and Devdas both would have followed me and a crisis was thus inevitable. Financially, the paper would have been ruined. So I definitely said 'No' and suggested that the matter be put before the directors and the shareholders. This distressed Panditji very much for some time but eventually he agreed to have a non-committal policy. So the *Hindustan Times* will now make no comment either against or in favour of Panditji. I thought this was the best under the circumstances. I did not like to shock him by putting him out of the Board.

CHAPTER XII

A CRITICAL PERIOD

THE long-drawn-out discussions both in India and in England, which preceded and accompanied the slow passage of the *Government of India Act* through the British Parliament, continued. To revert to an earlier stage, I did not share the somewhat poor opinion of C. F. Andrews, which Arthur Moore had told me prevailed amongst his own countrymen. His goodness and integrity seemed to me beyond question. These perhaps outran his intelligence so that to the British he appeared a meddling busybody and this prevented him from being a successful intermediary. Also, although his own character was a fine one and would have justified him in some self-confidence, he seemed curiously incapable of existing except in the shadow of another. Thus he oscillated continually between his devotion to Gandhiji and his equally enthusiastic adoration of Tagore, whom he spoke of continually as 'the poet'.

Wardha, 16-12-34.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

Your kind letter giving most interesting details of your interviews with Moore. What you say is quite true, but how is that suspicion to be dispelled? Certainly not by go-betweens like C.F.A. for whom these men in high places have a very poor opinion, but by those who know Bapu well and who know the other party also well, and enjoy his confidence. But unfortunately most of those who come in this category are backboneless and can be brow-beaten and snubbed.

C.F.A. went to Delhi to meet the Home Secretary and the Home Member. Whether he succeeded in meeting both or one we do not know, but he quietly writes in his illusive way : 'Had long interview. Glad I came. Writing fully. Wire your plans.' Then there is a wire saying he is arriving here tomorrow ! I am

afraid he has been able to do very little as usual. But let us see. I shall let you know.

Yours affectionately,
MAHADEV

On the day on which Mahadev wrote this letter I was myself making an attempt at presenting the Indian view to the British Secretary of State in the following letter:—

Calcutta, 16th December, 1934.

Dear Sir Samuel Hoare,

I am writing this after reading the J.S.C. Report very carefully and after the splendid speech that you delivered in the House of Commons.

I am naturally writing this with some amount of hesitation as I know I have not found myself generally in agreement with you. But if my personal regard for you, and my constant humble endeavour to explain you and your efforts in a friendly light to quarters where they are misunderstood, entitle me to tell you what I sincerely feel, I may not resist the urge.

I have nothing to say about the report. You have rightly stated in Parliament that in India it has satisfied few. On the other hand, your words spoken to me during my last interview with you, 'howsoever radical a Secretary of State may be, with the present Parliament it is impossible to go beyond a certain stage,' are still ringing in my ears. I frankly recognise that, in the present Parliament, it may not be possible to go beyond the recommendations of the J.S.C. Report. But I am looking upon the situation entirely from a different angle.

I analogise the recommended scheme with the grant of powers of attorney in commercial houses. We grant general and special powers as need be to our managers and assistants. We can suspend the powers, and even dismiss the men, if we cease to trust them. But I do not know of cases in my own firm and in many other firms where such suspension or dismissal has not been rare. The arrangement has worked most successfully because the employer trusts the manager, and the manager reciprocates and both work for a common aim. This means that mutual trust and a common aim are more important than the contents of the powers of attorney. I believe that full responsible Government is the common aim in our case. Can it be said that mutual trust, good-

will, sympathy and mutual understanding so essential for the realisation of the aim—whether the first step in reforms be very modest or very substantial—is prevailing today in India? I am not blaming any party, but I sincerely feel that the Government being the governing party, it is they who have to cultivate this position. I would ask you to analyse the psychology of the events which, in my opinion, more than the defects of the scheme, is causing the talk of rejection rather than modification.

The Irwin-Gandhi pact recognised

- (1) Responsibility at the Centre,
- (2) Federal Government,
- (3) Reservation and safeguards demonstrably to be in the interest of India.

Evidently, it was recognised by the signatories to the Pact that whatever be the ultimate goal, reservation and safeguards were essential during a period of transition. Even those who talked of independence—and different men attached different meanings to the word—did not find reservations during the transition to be incompatible with the ultimate goal of complete and full responsible Government. Was it not so because there was a personal touch in the Irwin-Gandhi Pact which is missing just now? You have rightly emphasised the conception of partnership, but how is this conception to be translated into practice while avoiding the personal contact, which alone could establish mutual understanding and trust between the two countries? May I submit that it is the method of advance, rather than its measure, which will always count? The Montagu-Chelmsford reforms were introduced in an unfortunate atmosphere and I hope the mistake will not be repeated.

I have ventured to write this, though uncertain of my credit with you, because I am and have been most anxious to see a permanent, friendly and peaceful relation restored between the two countries, and have been, in my own humble way, working in this direction.

With the kindest regards, I remain,

Yours sincerely,
G. D. BIRLA

At the same time I had an interview with the Governor of Bengal, which I recorded in a letter to Mahadev Desai for Bapu's information:—

Calcutta, 18th December, 1934.

After I saw Moore, I talked to the Governor* on the same topic and he, while agreeing with me and pointing out his limitations, remarked, 'Why do not you speak to the Viceroy?' I said, 'I am an untouchable with the Viceroy.' He said, 'Surely, you saw him last year.' I said 'No' and added that I would like to see him only if he would encourage me to talk, but I do not want to go if he thinks me to be a busybody with some axe to grind. He said, 'The Viceroy would feel hesitation in talking, if he thought that you were an emissary of Gandhi.' I said, 'I am an emissary of none and so far as I know, Gandhiji has not appointed anyone as his emissary.' He said that he believed in my sincerity and would speak to the Viceroy and would write to me if he felt it was any use my meeting him. He asked me whether I would stay in Calcutta for a few days more to which I replied in the affirmative. I believe it is no use C.F.A. seeing them. I fear it may be spoiling the thing.

I would like to be more intimate with them and thus effectively represent Bapu and I could do this easily but I fear there is no natural opportunity just now. But now I am working my own way and allowing things to take their natural course.

After brooding for a week, I decided yesterday also to write to Samuel Hoare in the same strain. I realise that it is impossible in the present circumstances for the Government to open negotiations with Bapu on constitutional matters and, therefore, I am not pressing this. The only thing that I am pressing is that they should know Bapu and have personal contact with him. I think if they do this, the rest will look after itself. The best 'go-between' between the Government and Bapu can be Bapu himself.

There is nothing in the Joint Select Committee's Report. Its recommendations are nothing more than powers of attorney from a master to his employee which could be cancelled at will. But even this, with a proper understanding between Bapu and the Government, could bring us nearer to 'Swaraj' and help us in getting a better constitution in course of time. I therefore attach more importance to the change of heart than constitution, as Bapu always termed the phrase.

* Sir John Anderson, now Lord Waverley.

I have heard from a reliable source that there is a strong impression at Viceroy's House that all this organisation of villages by Bapu is merely to mobilise villages for the ultimate aim of starting another campaign of civil disobedience.

I am relieved to hear from you that Bapu is not coming here entirely for me. This would have really been very embarrassing. Now, I am looking forward to the pleasure of passing a few quiet days with him. But would people leave him alone?

C.R., under the mistaken impression that I was in bed, kindly wrote at this time about my health. I replied as follows:—

Calcutta, 20th December, 1934.

My dear Rajaji,

Thanks for your letter.

I was never in bed for any length of time, short or long. Of course, I had to take rest for three or four days in bed but then I was quite free to move about in my house. The doctors did not allow me to go to office or to go out of Calcutta because they feared infection.

I heard about your visit to Delhi, and also read your interview about the Joint Parliamentary Committee's Report. And I was amazed that you thought that it was something worse than the present constitution. I thought we were both of the same opinion that even with its worst phases it could not be worse than the present constitution. Maybe that your speech was mis-reported. Personally, I think that what is necessary and what is possible is not any constitutional change but a great change in the present atmosphere. If the atmosphere were friendly on both sides and there was goodwill on behalf of Great Britain, the constitution would work well even though it is not satisfactory. On the other hand, even a better constitution would fail if the present atmosphere does not improve. I thus attach more importance to the atmosphere than to the measure of advance.

Agatha says that you should go to London and I have myself begun to feel that if a go-between is necessary, it is far better that you and Vallabhbhai went to London rather than that Mr. Andrews, with the best of intentions, should move about and achieve nothing. He is just now with me and is going to see

the Viceroy tomorrow. Bhulabhai is the best man for seeing the Viceroy, and now that he has got a constitutional position I think his seeing him would mean something.

I hope Laxmi and the baby are quite well. Devdas is going to turn into another Tushar Kanti Ghose who during the day toils for the *Patrika* and at night dreams about it.

Yours sincerely,
GHANSHYAMDAS

Sir Samuel Hoare's reply arrived in the new year and is dated 4th January, 1935:—

Personal.

Dear Mr. Birla,

I was glad to hear from you again. Many thanks for what you say about my speech. I am afraid we are not in agreement on the constitutional question. But it is a good thing that we should at any rate understand each other's point of view. It is evidently the safeguards that occupy the prominent position in your mind. To us here the impressive fact is that there is to be so large an extension of self-Government. The difficulty has been—and it has been a very great difficulty—to persuade people that the safeguards are sufficient, indeed that they are substantial safeguards and not merely paper safeguards. Of course they are some people here who would never be persuaded of this at all. But we have now, I think, succeeded in persuading the great mass of sensible people who are taking the whole problem very seriously and are genuinely anxious to do the right thing by India. The opinion which now prevails here as a result of our efforts was very well expressed the other day by one of our best political writers in the following words: 'Side by side with the grant of free institutions, there is forming in the safeguards a new conception of the nature of the British Raj in India. . . . We both give liberty and underwrite its risks.' I hope you will appreciate the last phrase as one taken from the language of business. I wish that you and your friends would see the matter in this light. The general feeling here is one of prudence. You would probably call it caution. But certainly it is not one of illiberality. I am afraid this is not realised in India. But I still hope that, in the

end, things will turn out better than you appear to think at present.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
SAMUEL HOARE

I wrote again as soon as I received it:—

19th January, 1935.

Dear Sir Samuel Hoare,

I am grateful to you for your letter of the 4th January.

I fear I could not express myself clearly in my last letter or else you would not have said that the safeguards occupied a prominent position in my mind. I am not at all frightened of the safeguards. Even in the interest of India, certain safeguards will be necessary. I would not say that the safeguards provided in the report are in the best interests of India. Besides, in as much as the Report does not make any provision for the next step towards the ultimate goal, this is no mean defect. But I admit, as I did in my last letter, that you have your own difficulties; and I would be ignoring the realities if at this stage, when the die is cast, I tried to persuade you to make such alterations in your plans as would satisfy Indian opinion. What I therefore wanted to convey to you in my last letter was this: Whatever be the safeguards, they would not hinder progress if there was genuine sympathy and goodwill behind them. I may accept what you say, that the scheme reflects an act of prudence and not one of illiberality. But do not you think you would like the best in India to share your views and get up and say: 'The constitution is not what we want, but we will work it honestly for constructive purposes because what is lacking in the letter is to be made up in the spirit?' I want your incoming 'partners' to be personally assured by the partners in Britain that she wanted to do the right thing by India and that there was no lack of liberality. When I say this, I am not talking as people generally do with vague ideas but as a practical business man who believes that given goodwill such a position can be achieved and must be achieved. At times, I even feel that I should come to London to persuade you personally to share my views that with mutual understanding even bad safeguards could become an insurance against risk, whereas even good ones in the absence of a human

touch become a stumbling block in the path of peace and smooth working.

Your frank reply to my last letter has encouraged me to write all this, and I assure you that you can always count on my service for any step that you take to create a cordiality which is at present lacking in the Indian atmosphere and which is so necessary in the interest of both the countries who by destiny are bound together.

Yours sincerely,
G. D. BIRLA

In the previous chapter there was mention of my interview with the Home Member, Sir Henry Craik, on the 30th June, 1935. As an illustration of my unshakable belief in the value of personal contacts and my impulse to urge this on every possible occasion, it may be of interest to give in detail my own record of this interview:—

The man is about 60 and from his face appeared to be straight and honest. At the outset, he warmly thanked me for coming to meet him and said that he had heard from the Viceroy that I differed from those who said that the proposed reforms are worse than the Montagu reforms. I said, 'Yes, I did ; but my opinion is not unqualified. I told the Viceroy that I had not come across one man who did not believe that the proposed reform was worse than the Montagu reforms, and if I did not agree with them, it was because I felt that with goodwill and sympathy from both sides, the proposed reforms could lead us towards our ultimate goal.' I said, 'I would not judge the report by its contents but by the spirit in which it would be worked. If there was no sincerity on the part of Britain, the safeguards would become really obstructive. On the other hand, if there was sincerity and sympathy, they would become a real insurance against risk.' He said, 'I can assure you that there is genuine sympathy and goodwill. I am not saying this about Churchill and his followers, but there is plenty of young blood among the Tories who are really sympathetic and feel that they are parting with great power. The safeguards are only against risk and I do not think they will ever be operative. It will be a great mistake if India rejects

it. It is true that there is an unsatisfactory aspect in the scheme. We have not got as much as even we, the Government, wanted. Englishmen were frightened of the Congress utterances. Hence, you find the safeguards. But please assure Mr. Gandhi that there is genuine sympathy and goodwill on our part to do good by India and get Mr. Gandhi's co-operation.' I replied, 'I may accept your assurance and take it that you are all sympathetic and want to do good. At the same time, when I sit at the feet of Gandhiji I find that he is most reasonable and equally eager to co-operate for the good of the country. Do not you think I have reasonable cause for bewilderment if I feel that there is desire here and a desire there and yet there is a gap? Surely, there is some vital element lacking in your desire which precludes offering a hand of co-operation to Gandhiji.' He replied, 'I do not understand what you mean. Do you want the Viceroy and Gandhi to meet? His Excellency would very much like to see him but this boycott on the part of the Congress M.L.A.s has created certain complications. I wish you could do something in the matter because that would be helpful.' I said, 'For this, you have to speak to Bhulabhai but you ought to judge the M.L.A.s not by what they have done but by what they have not done.' And I related the story of the M.L.A.s deciding not to attend the Viceroy's speech. He was very much impressed.

I said, 'Look at another instance of Gandhiji's reasonableness. He deliberately accepted a cut of 6½ per cent.* That shows the compromising and constructive spirit of the man. One can very well imagine you, Sir Henry Craik, as a man who broke the heads of thousands and issued ordinances, walking with pistol and sword in your hands. But when I see you and hear you, I find that you are a straight and honest man. Similarly, you may be hearing all sorts of things about Gandhiji and his lieutenants and building clouds of suspicion in your mind. But you all forget that a man is a man. He has a heart and sentiments. Have you ever tried to touch the heart of Gandhiji?' He said, 'Yes, I quite agree that it has been very unfortunate but tell me what are Gandhiji's views about reforms? He has never expressed his views in public. Has he expressed them in private?' I replied, 'Would you be surprised if I told you that he has not even

* I cannot now remember after such a lapse of time what this 6½ per cent. refers to.

read the Report and this is just like him. He is accustomed to judge bigger things by smaller happenings. If he finds no generosity in smaller things, he would say to himself: "There is no hope of finding generosity in the Report itself." But I can tell you something about his mind. People come and tell him that the proposed scheme is worse than the Montagu reforms and he endorses it. And when I say to him that the proposed scheme could be worked successfully and to the fullest advantage of India if there were sympathy and goodwill from both the sides, he endorses my views too. And there is no inconsistency in it. And he explains that in this way: "When Montagu introduced his reforms, he at least took a section of the people into his confidence and got their support. That showed that there was some earnestness on his part to meet Indian opinion. For the proposed scheme, the Government have not got any section with them. That shows that they are indifferent towards winning the confidence of the people. And so the proposed reforms prove to be worse than the Montagu reforms."—You are talking of partnership but want to avoid contact with your incoming partners. How does this prove goodwill or sincerity? If you can prove that there is sympathy and goodwill and that it is due to circumstances beyond your control that you cannot advance further, then Gandhiji would find a solution for you and offer his helping hand. He would then accept the reforms as something better than the present Constitution. When asked to define what Swaraj was, Gandhiji at one time defined it not through legal language, but by putting forward 10 or 14 points as symbolic of Swaraj. You will thus see the reasoning process of Gandhiji.' He said, 'This means that Gandhiji is not a practical politician.' I said, 'No. This only shows that he is the most practical man. And those who are not practical men make up their mind by the words put in cold print. He is quite different. And as I am a businessman, I say, in spite of every other opinion expressed, that with goodwill and sympathy, even the proposed reforms could lead us to our ultimate goal.' He at once saw his mistake in remarking that Gandhiji was not a practical man. I continued, 'The political education of the public has been on destructive lines before Gandhiji's advent. We have been taught to think that politics is confined to putting forward destructive criticism of the Government. Gandhiji gave a new conception. He said: "Spin and weave ; remove untouchability ;

unite with the minority and all that.” For the first time a constructive side was put before the public. But we have not yet learnt to admire the Government because you have given us no opportunity to do this. But all the same, this education is very dangerous. There is already a section growing up gradually which believes that even the best should not be achieved by constitutional means. They think that even Swaraj achieved through constitutional means is no Swaraj. Revolution to them is more essential than Swaraj itself. They will continue to preach hatred against the classes and the Government, whether it be alien or Indian.* Gandhiji is fighting against this mentality. He would avoid bitterness at every step. Swaraj attained through violence is no good to him. He attaches more importance to non-violence than even to Swaraj. His nearest lieutenants believe in his policy. But how long is Gandhiji going to live? It is essential that some settlement should be made in Gandhiji’s lifetime which may bring the Government and the people closer to each other. This would be the beginning of the new kind of education which would teach people to believe that the Government is their own institution, which should be mended and not ended. If the mode of this education is not immediately changed, very serious harm will be done. A revolution of the bloody type may become an inevitable factor. And this would be the greatest calamity not only to India but also to England. Tories may say this would be India’s funeral. I say it would be a funeral for both. Gandhiji is the only man who can stand up for the right thing even if this may mean his unpopularity.’

He said, ‘I have not the least doubt that Mr. Gandhi is the most courageous man. I have no doubt about his sincerity and I admit he has checked the tide of communism. But supposing we can convince Gandhiji of our sincerity and get some sort of agreement with him, would the country follow him?’ I said, ‘Yes. I have not the least doubt. And he is capable of resisting injustice even though it came from his own men.’ He said, ‘I judge the Congressmen from what is written in the Press which is at present very bad.’ I said, ‘We are moving in vicious circles. Distrust begets distrust. You have created an atmosphere of distrust and thus proved that this theory of partnership by which you are swearing is mere cant, when you do not want even to

* How true it has turned out !

see your partners.' He said, 'Would you assure Mr. Gandhi that we are all very fond of him and that we are ready to give him our co-operation?' I replied, 'What is the use of my conveying the message when you hesitate to come in contact with him?' He said, 'Do you want this contact at once or after the Bill is passed?' I said, 'No use delaying. The sooner we start educating the public on different lines, the better for all of us.' He said, 'I tell you frankly that I am afraid of seeing him. I am a simple man with a small brain. He may be too big for me.' I said, 'I am sorry to hear this. When you admit that he is sincere and honest, if you want to approach him with sincerity and honesty then you should be pleased to get his strength on your side.' And I assured him that a frank and honest man of his type would appeal to Gandhiji most. He remarked, 'Do you really believe that a man like myself would appeal to him?' I said, 'Yes, because you have impressed me as a straight man.' He said, 'Believe me that I have been 32 years in India and I call myself an Indian. I have sided with Indian sentiment and aspirations and I will continue to do so. I do not know whether I am an honest man but I can say this much, that I have always tried to be honest and straight. I will give my serious thought to what you say, but convey to Mr. Gandhi that we wanted to have a much better constitution than what is proposed. We fought for it. Hoare fought for it, but there is a genuine difficulty on behalf of the Churchill group which could not be ignored. Young Tories are really anxious to do good by India. We are all sympathetic and sincere. Do not think there is any likelihood of the Labour Party giving anything more.'

Then we discussed Vallabhbhai. He expressed anxiety to meet him and I have arranged a meeting for him at my house on the 6th at 5 p.m.

The sum total of my impressions is this : they are very keen on the personal touch but are still hesitating. They have realised that the country is not with them. They have also realised that Gandhiji is courageous and honest and that if anyone could stand up and make a compromise on the constitution, it is Gandhiji. And this has kindled a new hope in them. I think their mind is working in the right direction.

CHAPTER XIII

HINDUS AND MOSLEMS

SIR SAMUEL HOARE wrote again on the 30th January 1935:—

Personal.

Dear Mr. Birla,

Many thanks for your further letter of the 9th January. It contains expressions which I was glad to read. It does seem a difficult business to persuade India of our real goodwill towards the country. I am convinced there is a vast amount of it. Even the great majority of those who are opposing our present policy are animated by a feeling of goodwill according to their lights. That is to say, they are genuinely concerned with the well-being of the common people of India and they resist our proposals because they honestly do not think them conducive to that end. If general assurances will not avail, then we must hope that you and your friends will ultimately find the practical evidence of sympathy and goodwill that you seek in your experience of the new constitution when it is actually working. After all, as we say in this country, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. I tried in a recent speech at Oxford to give a sketch of the new Constitution as I imagine it working, and I send a copy in case it interests you to read it. You will see that I developed there some of the ideas expressed in my last letter to you. I have to maintain what you call the human touch with more than one school of thought. But I shall try to say more of what is in my mind as sympathetically as I can when I speak on the second Reading of our Bill next week.

Yours sincerely,
SAMUEL HOARE

By Airmail

15th February, 1935.

Dear Sir Samuel,

Many thanks for your letter and the copy of your speech which I have sent for reproduction in the local English daily, the *Hindusthan Times*.

I quite understand your reasoning which is this :—‘We are giving a substantial advance to India but it is not fully realised

now. The proof of the pudding is in the eating and the Indians will realise our sincerity and goodwill and the volume of the advance when they work the reforms.' With this feeling on your side and with personal contact, establishment of mutual understanding should be an easier task still. But evidently, you cannot say more at this stage than what the circumstances permit. I would only say that a Partnership Deed is a document signed by both the partners. The present Bill is signed only by one. I submit that either today or at a later stage, you must get the signatures of your partners on the Partnership Deed if it is to bring forth happy results. The greatest complaint against the Lancashire Pact was that it was a thing imposed and not one agreed upon. I hope you will avoid that situation in respect of the Reforms. Without boring you further with my views, I shall leave the matter at that and hope for the best.

I need hardly add that I quite realise the earnestness and sincerity in your letter and this encourages me to entertain a hopeful view.

With the kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,
G. D. BIRLA

The Hindu-Moslem question proved a difficulty at all the successive Round Table Conferences which preceded the *Government of India Act*. Whether there should be a common electoral roll and common constituencies for all communities, or whether there should be separate electorates, or yet again whether there should be joint electorates with reservation of some specified number of seats—all these proposals were vigorously discussed. Unfortunately no firm agreement was ever reached, hence the tragedy of Partition that finally resulted. Leading Hindu politicians would not take Bapu's advice although they professed to honour him. He was all for conciliation and was prepared even to lay down his life for Hindu-Moslem unity, whereas more worldly politicians saw the whole problem as a struggle for 'loaves and fishes' for members of their community. On the Moslem side, Mr. Jinnah was equally intractable. He

scorned Bapu's professions of friendship and regarded them as merely part of some general Hindu conspiracy to trick him out of his own ambitious designs for an independent Pakistan, of which he would be the Head. Indeed it can be said that once he had conceived this grandiose design, and so long as he remained the leader of his community, all proposals and negotiations for a settlement other than Partition, were useless and foredoomed to failure. Some of Bapu's devoted followers, however, continued to hope for compromise and Dr. Rajendra Prasad devised a formula. Concerning this I wrote to Mahadev Desai in a letter dated 21st February, 1935:—

My dear Mahadevbhai,

I have personally advised Rajendra Babu that (if the Mohammedan leaders accept the formula which, I fear, they will not) we must get the Hindu masses to accept it even if the Hindu Sabha leaders maintain an opposition. I am quite optimistic about the results, if only the Congress will take up a definite attitude. Even the Hindu Sabha might ratify the formula in its session provided the Congress leaders work for it. I hope Bapu will approve of such a move. Enough mischief has been done by communalists. This may be tolerated so long as the Mohammedans show no inclination for a settlement. But if they indicate their desire, then it is up to the Congress leaders to tell the Hindus frankly what is in their best interest, and I have not the least doubt that the latter would follow.

Yours affectionately,

GHANSHYAMDAS

A few days later I wrote on the same subject to Bapu:—

26-2-1935.

My dear Bapu,

Poor Rajendra Babu is in a predicament. Raja Narendranath and Pandit Nanakchand both have accepted Rajendra Babu's formula, but there is a great deal of disagreement among the Hindus of Bengal and also among the Sikhs. Pandit Malaviyaji tries to reason now with this group, now with that, but it is

evident he cannot go beyond the scope of the Jinnah-Rajendra Babu formula. My own impression is that the people are a prey to cowardice. For instance, the Bengal M.L.A.s like the formula all right, but have not the courage to sign it. The editor of *Amrita Bazar Patrika* liked it, but the *Ananda Bazar Patrika* editor didn't. Then there are some hot-headed youths who have been described as revolutionaries. Everybody is afraid of them. Nalini is coming, but since he hails from East Bengal, he is afraid of the mention of the word joint electorate. Sardar Mangal Singh and Master Tara Singh like it to some extent, but are likewise afraid. Gyani Tara Singh would not touch it with a pair of tongs. Gokul Chand Narang and others like it, but are afraid of the Sikhs. If a settlement is dependent on the signatures of individuals, then it must be distinctly understood that it will remain an unrealised dream till Doomsday. We are, of course, trying, but in the meantime I have suggested to Rajendra Babu: 'Let there be a settlement between the Congress and the League, and let the same be placed before the public.' It is true the Government will not act up to it for some time to come ; but, then, this is the only way out, and I believe that if Rajendra Babu acts accordingly, the forces working for a settlement will be greatly strengthened. Both Rajendra Babu and Vallabhbhai approve of this suggestion. Let us see what happens.

The maps for the Harijan Ashram are with the Committee. As soon as they are approved, the work will begin.

My rams and sheep from Australia have arrived. I am leaving for Pilani in about a week's time and am expecting a letter from you.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

28th February, 1935.

My dear Mahadevbhai,

A breakdown of communal negotiations seems to be imminent. Although the Punjab Hindus were not unfavourable towards the proposal, the difficulty comes chiefly from Sikhs and the Bengal Hindus. Among the Bengal Hindus those who come from West Bengal are favourably disposed towards Joint Electorates. On the other hand, East Bengal is simply frightened of it, and the worst part of the whole thing is that there is not a single

Bengalee leader who can speak out with courage. Even those who like the proposal cannot say so openly.

We had a small conference this morning of Rajendra Babu, Bhulabhai, Vallabhbhai and myself, and we thought that it would not be desirable to proceed any further. Any prolongation of the negotiations in our opinion would simply create further complications. We all agreed that if we could get a Congress-League settlement, we should get it. But Jinnah was not prepared for it and we also realised that minus Bengal (and even Congress Bengalees are not prepared to support us), the pact would be meaningless. It is a great tragedy and we can draw a moral from it. First, there is not even one Bengalee to support us boldly. This may be a condemnation of Bengal, but Congress is no less responsible for it. We never backed anyone in Bengal and so not one advocate of our viewpoint is to be found. The communal question remains unsolved, and by our failure we stand before the world thoroughly humiliated.

You may have noticed that the Government of India have set apart one crore of rupees for village uplift. Thanks to Bapu, they have been moved, but I fear the money may not be well spent. They are not in touch with realities, and instead of thinking and providing food and cloth to the masses, they may think of providing radios! The money will be spent through the ministers in the Provinces. I wonder whether the Village Industries Association should not take the initiative and offer to help the Government. If my memory is not playing a trick with me, I think Vallabhbhai virtually captured the Government fund when he organised the Gujarat Flood and Relief Fund. I think Bapu, if he once makes up his mind, can get virtual possession of this crore by tackling the Provincial Governments and the Ministers properly. This is just for his information.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

CHAPTER XIV

PILANI

PILANI, my pet project, is now such a flourishing institution that it may be of interest to recall some of its earlier days. It has now risen to the status of a university college where a patch of the Rajputana desert has literally blossomed like the rose. But it was not ever thus.

A letter I wrote for Bapu's benefit to Mahadev Desai began about other matters, but soon got on to the subject of Pilani. The first part compares the conduct of the Government of Bengal which had recently at least publicly admitted and corrected a mistake, and that of some of our own leaders, who did not correct public accusations which they knew to be untrue. I was evidently feeling piqued at a scurrilous campaign which the now defunct newspaper, the *National Call*, carried on against me despite the fact that friends of mine, who knew that its reckless statements sprang from unworthy and purely mercenary motives, sat upon its Board of Directors.

Birla House, New Delhi,
17th January, 1936.

My dear Mahadevbhai,

Thanks for your letter. It did not relieve me much. This time the serious feature about Bapu's health is that he is not fully responding to the rest or to the treatment. I am glad that he is continuing to rest. Please tell Sardar and also Bapu that unless he is absolutely fit, he need not come to Delhi at all. Of course, the Delhi climate is very good, but if he comes he should come only for rest and nothing else. In that case, Sardar should accompany him. On the other hand, if Ahmedabad proves beneficial to his health, he need not make any change. Sardar has asked me to come to Ahmedabad sometime when Bapu is there. I have also once to visit the Sabarmati Ashram as its trustee, and I will fix up my programme later. If Bapu does not come here, I shall pass February in Calcutta.

I note that you did not like both the letters nor did Bapu like them. I should love to have your criticism about my letter. If it was couched in language which did not find favour with you, I think it is the fault of my mentality. Had I expressed myself in a somewhat different way, probably I would have expressed not my views but someone else's views. So, the criticism is not of the letter but of my own thoughts, and I should love to hear from you what you objected to. I want this for my own guidance.

As regards the Governor's reply, I don't agree with you. Why should you expect too little from our own men and too much from our opponents? Please don't misunderstand me if I put forward a small analogy. Take the case of the *National Call*. It has abused me for the last three years, in season and out, without a tiny finger being raised by Dr. Ansari and other directors. You may say, and I would agree with you, that poor Rajendra Babu is a saint, but when you talk of justice, you cannot make allowance for anyone's saintliness. The Governor, in the one case, got the contents expunged, but in this other case, at least one of the directors, viz. Dr. Ansari, thinks it not his duty even to go into the matter. By writing all this, I am not making any complaint against anyone. You know my regard for Rajendra Babu. My main object in reminding you of this analogy is that we should take human nature as it is, and just as we should make allowance for the Directors of the *National Call*, so should we for the Governor of Bengal. But I am more eager to have your criticism about my own letter or rather about my own mentality.

About Pilani, I don't want to write anything in the *Harijan*. It would be sheer advertisement for nothing, as the whole work is in an experimental stage. We decided last year that every boy in the school and the college—and there are 800 boys in all—must drink milk, half a seer per day. It was also decided that those who could not afford to pay should be given it free. The problem arose as to how to provide the milk, and Pandya, in spite of his best efforts, could not get more than 20 cows. Even they were not all of a good breed. The villagers call him 'Kheti Master' and when Pandya brought old cows from Rohtak and Hissar districts, they made jokes at his expense. And the milk problem remained unsolved. On the other hand, in the village

itself, you can get good milk at the rate of 26 pounds per rupee. So, Pandya was asked to buy milk and provide the same for the boys until we have sufficient cows. This has upset Pandya. To purchase nearly 6 cwt. of milk, boil it and then sell it to the boys is as large a problem for him as one of my big mills is to me. His discomfiture is something comic. But the boys have now begun to get milk, and we hope that within the next 10 days everyone will be drinking milk.

Every 6 months we have a medical examination, and the effect of a scientific regulation of diet will be worth noting. Spices have been prohibited in the kitchen, and we are now considering controlling the kitchen instead of allowing the boys to make their own arrangement. We may even open a class for cooking.

The Harijan Hostel is progressing, and one boy who is reading in the upper classes has been brought to live in the larger hostels where caste Hindu boys reside. The Harijan boy has been taken without the slightest objection from the other boys.

We have now got about 150 sheep. The four Australian sheep gave birth to two lambs and a further two are to be born shortly. Thus we shall have about 10 Australian animals in the near future. The Australian rams were mated with some Bikaneri sheep and a cross breed has been produced. But Pandya did not keep a correct record of the quantity of the wool produced per sheep, so we could not make a proper comparison of the Australian sheep with the Bikaneri and the Hissar type.

From the financial point of view, the dairy has not been a failure. If we don't take the depreciation into account, we have lost nothing. We sell milk at the rate of 3 pice per lb. and on this basis the income and expense per cow come to about 10 rupees. If we don't take depreciation into account, we also don't take into account the new production.

The Holstein bull that I brought from England has begun mating. It is a fine animal and is the talk of the village. Lord Linlithgow told me in England that from the point of view of milk, the Holstein breed would be quite a success, and so I am making this experiment. Sahebji Maharaj also supports this view. Parmeshweri Prasad is against it and Pandya has got no special view about this breed.

In the agricultural experiment, we lost about Rs. 1,500 last year. We have discovered that we lose Rs. 4 per bigha in agriculture, and so we have decided to leave this line alone. Only 50 bighas will be cultivated for producing good seeds.

We are running the following departments in handicrafts: carpentry, cap making, leather work, blanket weaving, carpet weaving, dyeing, printing and bleaching. To this we are also adding this year tailoring, masonry, book binding, toy making and agriculture. We propose to take also poultry farming after some time. We have decided that from the next session, every boy from the lowest class to the Intermediate classes must take any one or two of the above subjects and devote at least 3 periods a week to them, so that when the Intermediate boy leaves the college, he will know at least one or two of the above subjects thoroughly. This will also make the industrial department self-supporting as we shall get free labour from the students.

Our expenses just now amount to Rs. 80,000. This is rather heavy you may say, but if you want to give a good education to 800 boys, in my opinion, Rs. 100 per head is not too much. In course of time, we may begin to get fees from the boys and that may help us to some extent. The physique of the boys is fine. Four things are compulsory : mass prayer, mass exercise and sport, milk-drinking and *swadhyaya* of the selected books. But although the boys are physically in very good state and the examination results are also very satisfactory, I cannot say how far they are superior in character to the boys from other colleges. Some students tell me that in many colleges in big towns boys get addicted to drink, whereas in our village the only drink is either water or milk.

Besides the College, School and the Girls School, we are just now running 15 village schools and we are increasing the number to 20 next year. For the village schools, we have decided this year that the teachers should take it upon themselves to plant fruit trees in every home. I am sending about 2000 orange plants this spring from Delhi. Oranges thrive very well in Rajputana. They were unknown 15 years back, but we were the first to make experiments and about 2000 plants have been grown in my garden, out of which about 200 bore fruits this year. It will be

IN THE SHADOW OF THE MAHATMA

a sight worth seeing if we can plant one tree for every home in a radius of 50 miles.

Please give my *pranams* to Sardar.* I have just had his letter and am not replying to him separately. I thought this would do.

Yours sincerely,
GHANSHYAMDAS

* Sardar Patel

CHAPTER XV

LONDON CONTACTS

STILL seeking to establish personal contacts between British leaders on the one hand and Gandhiji and the Congress leaders on the other, I went to London in the summer of 1935. I had in my enterprise the blessings of Bapu and also of the Governor of Bengal, both of whom gave me letters of introduction to important persons. My first interview was with Sir Findlater Stewart of the India Office, whom I found very sympathetic. He evidently felt some affection for Gandhiji, whom he had met when he visited India and also in London during the Round Table Conference. On the 14th June I wrote a full report of this interview to Gandhiji, from which I need only quote the last paragraph :—

He made enquiries about your health and said how he remembered the three happy hours on a Sunday when you talked with him. I said that this was a very good argument in my favour—‘there is no political agreement between you two and yet you cherish a happy memory of your meeting. This comes from the personal touch. The personal touch is lacking just now. It is through this that we ought to establish friendship.’ He will write to me again.

A few days later I met Mr. Butler, now Chancellor of the Exchequer but then Under-Secretary at the India Office. Of this conversation I also sent a long report to Gandhiji. To me it was already evident that the English in London sincerely believed that a great step forward towards India’s self-government was about to be taken as soon as the Bill became law, whereas in India there was an equally genuine feeling that it would be a great step backwards. Mr. Butler saw the point and we discussed alternative suggestions for breaking the deadlock. One of my suggestions was that the next Viceroy

should come to India with definite instructions to establish contact immediately. Another proposal was that either the Secretary of State or the Under-Secretary should come to India and make contacts. There was still another alternative, namely that Gandhiji should be invited to London, possibly for some other ostensible reason, but really for conversations. Butler was quite pathetic on the subject. He said: 'We feel disheartened when we think that this Bill for which we sacrificed our health, our friends and our time, is supposed to be a retrograde step. Sir Samuel Hoare lost his health; I stood up to the strain because I was a young man, but all the same I did undergo a great strain and this is the reward.' He said, 'Lord Halifax has made India the mission of his life,' and urged me to meet Mr. Baldwin, the Prime Minister, and Lord Zetland, the Secretary of State, as soon as possible.

I also had pleasant talks with Sir George Schuster. My report to Gandhiji records:—

I told him what I was doing in my village. He was very interested, and said he preferred fresh milk to dry powder. He asked me to talk to Linlithgow about it. He asked me to come whenever I want any help and he will do his best.

Interviews (mostly at meals) rapidly followed with Sir Basil Blackett, Sir Henry Page-Croft, Conservative Leader, and a whole group of Manchester leaders, whom Mr. Kirkpatrick invited to lunch at the House of Commons. Then came a long talk with the late Lord Lothian, that real friend of India. We can see now that, as things turned out, he put the position very correctly. The *Government of India Act* proved to be such an earnest desire for advance that the Congress decided to accept office and form ministries in what were then called provinces and are now called states. But for the War, which broke out four years later, a united federal India at the centre might also have been achieved and

Partition avoided. War, however, changed everything. Not only did the Congress Governments resign, but throughout the East nationalism received a tremendous fillip and, in the middle of the War, had reached such a passionate intensity that Gandhiji was successfully able to launch his Quit India campaign. Mr. Attlee and the British Government also fulfilled their wartime promises.

I reported Lord Lothian as saying:—

You who have not worked any constitution cannot realise what great power you are going to wield. If you look at the Constitution it looks as if all powers are vested in the Governor-General and the Governor. But is not every power here vested in the King? Everything is done in the name of the King and has the King ever interfered? We are a constitutionally minded people. Once the power passes into the hands of the legislature, the Governor or the Governor-General is never going to interfere. Of course he would interfere if there were danger to law and order or to the tranquillity of the country, but surely it is not your intention to disturb the peace. The Civil Service will always be helpful. The Labour Party in the old days abused the Civil Service in England, but immediately they came into power they became the Civil Service's best friends. You too will realise this. We are a disciplined people. They (the civil servants) will give you their advice but once a policy is laid down they will carry it out loyally and faithfully. I interrupted and pointed out the difference between the Civil Service in England and in India, where it is alien. I said, 'You have to accelerate the pace of Indianisation,' and he agreed. He said, 'The greatest danger you will now have to fight will be against control by the Military, but you have got everything else.' But he agreed with me that the psychology in India had to be improved and that it was very bad just now. He said, 'We could not help it. We had to fight the die-hards here. You cannot realise what great courage Mr. Baldwin and Sir Samuel Hoare have shown. It was a great triumph for Liberalism and we could not improve the psychology in India because we did not want to irritate the die-hards. They called the Bill a surrender and so we had to talk in different language. Besides this, another difficulty was Lord Willingdon. He has great distrust of the Mahatma and he is not a very brainy man.'

But in the middle of July the Bill will be on the statute book and there will be a change in the Viceroy next April, so we shall have to do something.' I said, 'I am impatient. I do not want to wait until next April. By that time the die will be cast.' Indian opinion had been educated to distrust the incoming reforms and by next April preparations would be made to fight the next election on the issue of wrecking them. He agreed that something should be done immediately and asked if I had any constructive suggestion. I said: first personal contact and then a pact. I said either Anderson should talk, or the Secretary of State should come to India, or Mr. Gandhi should be invited here. He said he entirely agreed that something should be done to change the psychology immediately and he hoped that Lord Zetland would be able to do something. He said he would talk to Lord Zetland, Lord Halifax and Mr. MacDonald. I should see Mr. MacDonald. He would write to Mr. MacDonald about me and then I should fix up an interview.

Lord Zetland was then Secretary of State for India. During his father's lifetime he was known as Lord Ronaldshay and had been Governor of Bengal. There he interested himself in Hinduism and wrote a book called *The Heart of Aryavarta*. I went to see him in London and found him a good listener. One of his rare interruptions was to ask if Mr. Gandhi was a practical man. I said, Hoare, Halifax, Findlater Stewart and Smuts could give Mr. Gandhi a certificate on that point. Lord Zetland then asked, 'But what about his book *Home Rule*?' I replied that he had set certain ideals to be achieved, but until they were achieved we might not be able to live up to them, and I cited his opening of hospitals built by Lajpat Rai and C. R. Das, although he criticised hospitals in his book. Lord Zetland added that Gandhiji himself had had an operation. I said, 'You should not doubt his practicability. He is not after quantity but quality; it is spirit that he wants.' Lord Zetland said, 'I very much appreciate your point. I hate misunderstanding. When I was in Calcutta I could not understand why there could be any misunderstanding. English

people have got misgivings about Congress. The 'repudiation of debts' and all such talk has frightened them. Not only did the Government's opponents fear, but private letters from supporters said that they were doing something disastrous.' He wished he could make friends in India realise how they had to fight here against these heavy odds to get the Bill passed. I said I could get them to realise this only if the right atmosphere were created. The policy of 'see me not' had spoilt the atmosphere.

I cited Quetta affairs. He had the Gandhi-Willingdon correspondence before him. I read the relevant portions and told him to look at the difference between the two attitudes. He realised this and said, 'Now what can be done?' I said that a Willingdon-Gandhi meeting would be no use, yet it must come first as otherwise other Governors could not meet Gandhi. He said he realised this and I should keep in touch with Findlater Stewart. He would do his best to help and would talk to me again.

I sent a lengthy report to Gandhiji:—

29th June, 1935.

My dear Bapu,

It is a very slow process, meeting people in London, as they are booked for weeks and weeks ahead. I am seeing Halifax on the 5th, that is, a month after my arrival, and Hoare is so busy with Germany, Italy and China that he has asked me to wait and remind him again and again about an interview. Yet I know that both of them are keeping in touch with my work. All those whom I have seen have shown great sympathy—I do not think mere lip sympathy—with my mission. The most helpful of them is Sir Findlater Stewart and I think he counts a lot. He is very friendly towards you, never tired of singing your praises, and when I gave him your letter he read it with great affection and emotion. He has promised and is giving every help. Maffey* tells me that he has influence, brain and determination, and I am

* Now Lord Rugby.

told he is pro-Indian except where the direct interest of his service clashes. I realise more than ever that the men on the spot for the day-to-day administration, and permanent officials here for moulding wider policies, are the chief people to deal with. Ministers of course count, but permanent officials no less. Lord Zetland, after showing great sympathy with my object, told me significantly to keep in touch with Findlater Stewart. So I am sticking to this man and all my important interviews are arranged through him. And after two interviews with him, lasting two and a half hours, he has told me that he agrees with me in principle and that something precise has to be put on paper now and that is up to him to tell me the next step. Now a little more detail about my work.

I have met the following. Sir Findlater Stewart twice and talked for two and a half hours. Butler, Under Secretary of State; a very charming and intelligent man although very young. Talked for one hour and am lunching with him this week. Zetland talked for forty-five minutes and am meeting him again after the Bill is passed in the House of Lords. Lothian, talked for forty-five minutes and I am meeting him again after the Bill is passed. Lord Derby I am meeting again as many times as I like. Sir Henry Page-Croft I met twice. Lunched with the Manchester Group in the House of Commons. Lunched with Sir Henry Strakosch and he has asked me to lunch with him whenever I need his help. Lunched with Sir Thos. Catto and many other important City men, who have asked me to lunch again. Sir George Schuster twice. Lunched with Sir Basil Blackett and am lunching again. Lunched with Croft, Private Secretary to the Secretary of State. Saw Mr. Bone of the *Manchester Guardian*, and Mr. Crozier of the same paper will meet me at Manchester. And now during this week I am meeting Lord Linlithgow, Lord Halifax and Mr. MacDonald. Appointments are all fixed except for Sir Samuel Hoare. Findlater Stewart is going to arrange for an interview with Mr. Baldwin. Schuster said, don't waste any time over Simon. Lothian said, leave Lloyd George alone for the time being. Derby said, I must see Salisbury and Sir Austen Chamberlain. He said that among the die-hards, Lord Salisbury and Sir Henry Page-Croft are the most honest men. He has asked me to go to Manchester when he will invite me to lunch with influential Manchester friends. Lord Reading is ill. I am

also seeing more City men. Most of the important members of the Labour Party are lunching with me this week at the House of Commons. Later on I will see Church people and other journalists, but I have realised now that for my job Halifax, Zetland, Hoare, Butler, Baldwin and Lothian and, last but not least, Sir Findlater Stewart are more important than the others, so I will spend my time more or less on this group. Findlater Stewart has already promised to give me the next step so I am now in his hands.

Now about my conversation. Firstly, I told them that it is not a political stunt but a genuine feeling among Indians that, far from being an advance, the Bill is a retrograde step calculated to tighten the British grip. At this our friends here raise their hands in astonishment and cannot understand how Indians can think so. Secondly, I told them that I recognised their sincerity when they believed that it was a great advance. It would be so if there were the spirit behind the reforms, but there is no such spirit in India today when we deal with the man on the spot. 'I have felt all along,' I said, 'that it is not the contents of the Bill but the spirit that will count. Without the spirit the Bill is a most reactionary piece of legislation.' I pointed out to them that after all, on every point, the last say rests with the Governor-General and the Governors, and if the Governors and Governor-General used their powers, then the regime will be a first-class autocracy. If, on the other hand, they act up to the analogy of the constitutional monarch—an analogy advanced by every one of them—then the Bill could bring in a very good regime. So it all depends on the spirit in which it will be worked. I admitted that friends in England were full of goodwill and sympathy, but these sentiments did not cross the seas, since the actions of those in charge of the Indian Administration in India were in contrast with the feelings expressed here. I cited a very recent incident, *viz.*, the case of Quetta. I have handed over to them the correspondence that passed between you and Lord Willingdon. I tried to show the contrast between the two, *viz.*, your request and his reply. How, in such an atmosphere, could one believe that when today we were not allowed to see our own brethren in distress, we would soon be allowed to wield wider powers? It is this oppressive atmosphere in India which makes us believe that the reforms are a retrograde step. In order to create a different

psychology about the reforms so that they may be worked and the intention of our friends here may be fulfilled and the present strife ended once and for all, a better spirit should be cultivated in India without wasting much time. And I also told them how I had tried to cultivate that spirit at Delhi and failed. Thirdly, I told them how, in the absence of a friendly spirit, the Bill was likely to bring greater bitterness between the two nations. The present atmosphere, I said, was causing a growth of irresponsibility all round. The Civil Service was getting irresponsible and indisciplined. I cited how, in the case of the Khan Sahib, the Home Member could not do anything because the subordinates stood up against the Khan Sahib. Civilians in India just now thought their only function was to maintain law and order. And therefore every suggestion, even a good one from the popular side must be opposed. Irresponsibility among Congressmen made them suspect every move of the Government. The right-wing would, as a consequence, get weaker and the left-wing stronger. Even the right-wingers in the absence of any proper understanding were likely to work for the wrecking of the reforms. The present atmosphere was causing demoralisation of the Moham-medans, who thought that the Government would condone their worst actions. 'Gandhiji has kept his head above water in all these difficulties,' I tell them. 'But you are killing a man who is your best friend in the world.' I tell them that the present atmosphere is causing such demoralisation that it is almost impossible to do any constructive work in India. The necessity of increasing the purchasing power of the masses about which so much is being said by the English economists cannot be taken in hand so long as there is a gulf between the two.

That the rulers should be spending all their time on the maintenance of law and order and the people spending theirs in fighting the Government is a most deplorable phenomenon. I therefore tell them that this order must be reversed. The first step should be the establishment of personal contact. The second step should be to send the best men as Governors and Governor-General so as to avoid any friction between the Ministers and the Governors. I tell them that it must be borne in mind that the Congress has no interest in merely controlling the Government and running its machinery efficiently. If they accept office they will do so only to perform some constructive work. Retrenchment,

village uplift, physical culture, sanitation, expansion of education, adjustment of taxation in order to give relief to the poor and transfer the burden to the rich, provide more employment for Indians, help industries:—banking, shipping and insurance; make steady progress towards control of the military and full self-government. This is the programme which alone could attract the Congressmen to work the reforms. This is what I have told them.

In reply to this they say, 'The Bill will certainly give all the power to the Congressmen that you want. You fellows cannot imagine the alarm that this Bill has caused, not only among the opponents of the Bill but also among the supporters. Opponents revolted and opposed the Bill and called it a surrender. Supporters supported because of their loyalty, but privately they overwhelmed us with warnings about its disastrous effect on the rule of Great Britain.' 'It took great courage,' they say, 'on the part of Baldwin, Hoare and Halifax to get this Bill through. It is the grossest injustice to them and all other well-wishers of India not to appreciate their courage, the sacrifice of their party and friendly ties, and the strain on their health which this Bill has caused. There could be no unkindlier cut to them than to say that they have done all this to tighten the British grip. Where was the necessity? Was the grip any weaker? Tremendous power has been transferred, of which you have no idea. British rule is ending. No one can take the power back once it is transferred, and it has been transferred. Of course in the Bill it looks as if all the powers are reserved to Governors and the Governor-General, but does not this correspond to the position of the King and the House of Lords in England? The safeguards are in your interests. Who would be fool enough to meddle with your affairs? We are a constitutionally-minded people and no party in England would tolerate any Governor or Governor-General meddling with the affairs of the Minister, so long as he does not want to create chaos or anarchy. The only battle that you will have to fight will be the battle for the control of the Army. But if you control the whole Government machinery and work tactfully it will be easy for you to fight and win that battle. The Instrument of Instructions provides joint consultation with ministers in military matters. Congressmen, never having worked the Government machinery, do not realise that the safeguards are simply a lock

and key for the safety of the house and not a hindrance for the man who wants to go and live in it. You are talking of small things like village uplift, education and all that ; but it will be your Government entirely. You have to lay down your policy and carry your legislature with you and then carry out any programme you like. (It is no use my pointing out to them that 80 per cent of the revenue is already mortgaged to military service and debts, as it would be futile for me to open this question further at this stage.) No one is going to interfere with your plans.' As regards the prevailing atmosphere in India, they say, 'We fully recognise it, but we could not help it in the past. We could not say anything from this end which might help the agitation of the die-hards. It was not an easy thing for Mr. Baldwin, Lord Halifax and Sir Samuel Hoare, all Tories, to carry this Bill through a Tory Parliament with the die-hards fighting like mad bulls. We wish you could make your friends in India realise this. Of course, had there been a different Viceroy probably the atmosphere might have been better. But somehow or other the Viceroy and Gandhi did not hit it off. But now that this Bill is passed, something has to be done to improve the psychology. We admit that the psychology counts more than the contents of the Bill. We must, if possible, get Gandhi on our side. We entirely agree with you on this point ; the only question is —how to do it ?'

I am rather impressed with their sincerity. When men like Zetland, Butler, Lothian and Sir Findlater Stewart talk in such a manner, assuring me that the safeguards are not meant for meddling with the affairs of the ministers, I cannot help feeling that they are in earnest. I cannot believe that all this talk merely represents hollow sentiments. Mere sweet words have never deceived me in my business dealings and I should be very surprised at myself if I am carried away in this respect by their excellent behaviour and eloquence. In any case you should judge things for yourself, because even if I am deceived I am making no commitments, except this, that they must establish personal contact with you and come to an agreement about the working of the reforms. This ends the gist of the talks, my pleading and their reply. I hope it will not all end in smoke.

The following questions or suggestions come from those who matter, and are rather significant :

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(1) 'With whom should we come to an understanding?' I reply, 'The Mohammedans should be ruled out because they do not oppose the reforms. We have no desire to encroach upon their rights. The Liberals have no following and so need not be worried about. Communists can also be ruled out because they are part of the Congress, but if they are to be treated separately they need not be considered, because they have no desire to compromise. The only body left therefore is the Congress, and in dealing with the Congress you have to deal with Gandhiji because he alone can deliver the goods.'

(2) 'Would Gandhi be able to deliver the goods?' I reply, 'Yes'.

(3) 'What would be the condition for an understanding?' I reply: 'Mutual trust and friendship should be the basis. The constitution should be worked with a view to India's progress, and towards Dominion Status.' They reply to this that Dominion Status or friendship is not going to flow from a legal document; it will only come out of hard work and will be realised more by the efforts of India than the efforts of Great Britain. But of course they say, 'We will always be helpful.'

(4) 'We hate the words Pact or Treaty.' They say there is a strong prejudice against these words just now in England. Prejudices on both sides must be recognised. I reply to this, 'I don't care about the words so long as the substance is achieved. Are they not sending Anthony Eden to France, Italy and other places to talk matters over and get mutual understanding? Are they not still talking to Ireland?' To this they reply, 'Suppose after personal contact and understanding there was a solemn declaration from this side, say from the King and a reply by the Congress?' To this I say, 'I do not mind, so long as there is a mutual understanding about the obligations of both sides.' I tell them that a pact is better in their interests since it binds the other side, but I don't mind anything so long as what is meant is understood.

(5) 'Who is to meet Mr. Gandhi?' I say, 'Obviously the Viceroy has to break the ice because otherwise others could not talk; but merely meeting the Viceroy would not be very helpful. Someone else must handle Mr. Gandhi. I suggest Anderson.' I am asked, 'What about Emerson?'* Does Gandhi like him? I say, 'I do not know.' They tell me he is very good.

* Sir Herbert Emerson, Governor of the Punjab, 1933-38.

(6) 'Is Gandhi a practical man?' I reply, 'Halifax, Hoare, Smuts and Findlater Stewart can give him a certificate. Myself, a businessman, I would not run after a sentimentalist.'

(7) 'Can Mr. Gandhi make the following statement after we come in touch with him and after our solemn declaration: This Reform is not good, it is not what I wanted, but I am assured of goodwill and support for doing constructive work, and to help my country I will give it a fair chance?' To this I reply, 'Yes, he may say this. I am very hopeful provided you know how to deal with him. If you can be honest with him, lay your heart open and put all your difficulties before him, he will help.'

(8) Then they say, 'The greatest difficulty about Mr. Gandhi is that he has no constitutional position, although revered and loved by nine-tenths of his people. We English people are accustomed to dealing with men who have some constitutional position.' To this I reply, 'Would you wait until he becomes a Minister, because in that case you will have to wait until Doomsday?' Then I am told, 'Unfortunately his meeting with the Viceroy has assumed the importance of the meeting of two enemy leaders.' To this I reply, 'It is your own doing. Gandhiji met Lord Chelmsford as a friend and again Lord Reading and again Lord Irwin before the pacts were concluded.'

(9) 'Could you wait until the next Viceroy comes?' I say, 'It would be very late.'

I hope these questions will give you just the sense of the way the wind is blowing.

Now a few words about Lord Halifax, Butler and Lord Derby. Butler deliberately asked me about our impression in India of Lord Halifax. I said, 'He is still loved but we think he is a discredited man and has lost his influence over Indian affairs and that Englishmen in India dislike him most.' He said, 'I wish to correct you. Nothing is further from the truth than to say that he is discredited. He is very influential and he has not forgotten India. India is the mission of his life.' Mr. Butler is a very capable and intelligent man, with a wide outlook. He has no tinge of racial bias or superiority. He is very distressed at the way in which we suspect their motives. He is giving me every possible help. But the most charming personality I have come across is Lord Derby. He stands on no ceremony. When I wanted to see him he came at once to my hotel rather than

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see me at his own place. He will arrange any interviews for me that I want. He has told me to ring him up whenever I need his help and he will either come to me or send for me. He talked to me with great paternal affection and I liked the man very much.

Now I think it is your turn to write to me. You may hand over what you have to say to my man who will post it from Delhi by air. I hope I am representing you correctly and faithfully. I have to work hard against genuine misunderstanding in this atmosphere. When I got Mahadevbhai's letter from Quetta my heart simply broke. What a great contrast between the atmosphere prevailing there and the one prevailing here! I did not realise the difference between the two in India. I think this is mostly the fault of the machinery, and though I find men most congenial and nice I feel doubtful whether the machinery will move. The parts of the machinery will be fully oiled, that is all I can say. I see in your every action an effort to remove misunderstanding. Only you could do it under such exasperating circumstances. An eminent friend remarked: 'We are accustomed to constitutional practices. Mr. Lloyd George was a very big man so long as he was in office, but now, however we may respect him or anyone else, we can owe no allegiance to him or give any effect to his views so long as he is out of office. You should not forget that Mr. Gandhi is out of office. It will be quite different when you have your own Government. Civilians will simply be your slaves; today they cannot be. The change will not be a miracle, because they are taught to obey only their masters.' Well, let me wait for the next step from Sir Findlater Stewart.

July was a busy month for me and it began with an interview with the Lord President of the Council, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, who had recently handed over the Premiership to Mr. Baldwin. Here are my notes of our talk:—

'How is India?' he asked. I said, 'Very unhappy.' He said, 'Everybody is.' 'But our case is different,' I said. 'You have given us a constitution which you think is a sure advance and is likely to lead us towards our goal, whereas we think this is a retrograde step likely to tighten your grip. We feel this

because of the atmosphere in India. We are treated like lepers ; with distrust. You deliver sympathetic speeches but they do not carry us very far. We want sympathetic action. There is no human contact. Whenever we offer co-operation for any good thing, it is refused, and in this atmosphere you want us to appreciate the reforms. It is natural that we should suspect them, and your motives. You are throwing away seed without properly cultivating the land and providing water for irrigation. You cannot expect a good crop.' He said, 'You are absolutely right. Human contact is very essential but there have been difficulties. The Viceroy is a good man in himself and Mr. Gandhi is a good man too, but they cannot come together. It is like two pieces of good music. They are both good if separately sung, but if sung together there is no harmony ; that is the trouble.' 'Now who is going to be the next Viceroy ?' he asked. I smiled and said 'You put me that question as a man who does not know the secret. How can I tell ? But some talk of Linlithgow or the Governor of Bengal, Lord Lothian and Lord Percy.' I also added, 'Your name and Hoare's name too have been mentioned.' He became quite serious and said, 'You see a Provincial Governor cannot become a Viceroy. Lothian, I can say, is out of the picture, but about myself I would love to go if my health would permit, but it does not. You know how I love India. I was responsible for the continuance of the R.T.C. principle. When the Government changed I made it a condition that this question should not be dropped. And we should revive the R.T.C. principle now again, not on that scale but on a smaller scale. We must make a sympathetic beginning. Many men want the safeguards to be used immediately, and if the Congress comes into conflict the safeguards will come into prominence, but otherwise nobody here wants to use the safeguards. Congress will be playing into the hands of the die-hards if they begin with the idea of smashing the constitution, but we, on our part, have to ensure a sympathetic beginning. The whole thing is like a garden. You have to develop it with patience, and you have to keep patience but you must accept our pledge of sympathetic action. I entirely agree with you that something should be done to ensure that atmosphere.'

I said, 'You have said something more beautiful than I wanted to say.' Then he went on thinking aloud, just looking

at the ceiling. 'How to do it. It is a problem. We have not made a beginning as yet. It is just as much a problem as it is for me to find the rooms in my new office. I do not know all the alleys and the lanes. I am just getting accustomed to this new building, but yours is only a passing phase, though a big phase ; it must be faced. It would be stupid not to face it but I do not know how to help you. I think I should go to India in the winter and see Mr. Gandhi. I may go for a rest and as a tourist. There are difficulties in the way of my going, but I wish I could go. I will mark time. If I go, I must see my friend Mr. Gandhi. I do not care what they think about it, I must see him, and I know that if I see him I shall be able to settle affairs. But just now I do not see the light. I have just retired from very heavy work and I am still suffering from insomnia. I am settling down in my new house. It is all confusion and chaos in my new house. No peg to hang my coat on and no shelf to keep my books in. You know I am a poor man. I will be able to put the house in order in a week's time, then I will think about things more, but just now I cannot see how I could help.' During the course of the conversation he repeated thrice his desire to go to India and then I said that if he could not go, someone else should talk to Gandhiji. Why should not the Governor of Bengal talk ?

He felt proud of the Governor of Bengal because he was a Scot. 'But you have to help,' I said. 'You are a Cabinet Minister, you could do a lot.' He said, 'Did you talk to the India Office ?' I said, 'Yes.' 'Lord Zetland is a good man,' he said. I said, 'Yes, but I do not know whether he has the same determination as Hoare.' He said, 'Hoare was convinced about the justice of the case in defending the Bill. Zetland already sympathises with India, therefore his support may be rather remote, but I do not know. In any case the initiative has to come from the Secretary of State. We meet in Cabinet once a week only for two hours and so I do not see much of Zetland, but if he takes up something it must go through. He is wide awake to the fact that if the reforms do not get good support, his reputation must suffer. Therefore they will all listen to you.' I said, 'Lord Zetland agrees with me, and Sir Findlater Stewart helps me a lot, but no one yet talks of the next step.' I told him how many men I had met. He remarked, 'You are spreading your net very wide, I

am glad. But don't think they are not thinking of the next step. They are thinking of the next step. They are thinking about it but they cannot speak just now. They must listen to you. Don't go to India with the impression that here is no next step. You will succeed. I wish I could go to India, but meantime I will think over the matter as to how to help you. You should see me again.'

I told him that in order to get rid of his insomnia, he should make changes in his diet, and how I had managed it. He said, 'I want a doctor friend otherwise I do not believe in doctors. I breakfast with Horder every morning and that helps me a lot.' He talked of old days when he went to India and of some of the old men who were very nice.

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Still preaching my gospel of personal contacts, I had an interview the next day with Lord Linlithgow, lunch with Mr. and Mrs. Butler, tea with Mr. Attlee and Mr. Lansbury, and dined with Labour Members at the House of Commons. Here is my note about this function:—

Major Attlee, Rhys Davies, W. Paling, Seymour Cocks, Tom Smith, Tom Williams, Morgan Jones, John Wilmot and Charles Edwards were present. I told them some home truths and saw some of them were irritated. Almost all of them unintelligent and dull. I said, 'You want us to put our faith in your sympathy and goodwill while you continue to distrust our motives and you decide for us every time what is good. Even when our people are in distress, you alone can decide what is best in the circumstances.' Attlee put forward the Government point of view and said both sides were at fault. 'You made a blunder in not settling things in 1930 when we were in power.' I said, 'You could not have given us any Bill because the House of Lords would have blocked your way. You Labour members are accustomed to deliver speeches in highflown language with no intention of fulfilling the promises you make.' This irritated some of them. I diverted the conversation to economics but again India came in. I said, 'Your present standard of living rests upon external trade and foreign investments. You know that external trade is diminishing, and some time foreign investments will have to be written

off. Will you then be able to maintain your present standard only with your internal production ?' They said, 'No.' I asked, 'How do you then reconcile your ambition for a still higher standard with your advocacy of self-determination for India ?' They did not like this anomaly to be pointed out. I told them stories that I had heard. I asked a prominent Labour member why they put Mr. Benn in the India Office when he knew little of India. 'Because,' I was told, 'a brilliant man would come into conflict with the Services here and the Government of India there and Mr. MacDonald very cleverly put into every office a man who would ensure smooth sailing and would always yield to the Services.' I was told that when Lord Passfield took charge of his department in 1924 he assembled the civilians of his department and said, 'Gentlemen, I know you have been the masters in the past and you will continue to be so in the future, so carry on.' One of the guests said it was true, and he added that they could not live up to their professions. 'We passed all sorts of resolutions in the last Conference,' said he, 'which if put into effect would use up all the wealth of the world.' Major Attlee did not like this. He disputed everything that I said. He said, 'Labour was your best friend. Gandhi is contradictory, an astute politician. Congress is full of corruption. None of the big leaders in India want adult franchise.' I said, 'Major Attlee, evidently you know Gandhi better than myself. I came to England to study the English people, but evidently you want to teach me something about my own country, but I am not desirous to learn this from you.' Then we all cooled down. Attlee and other members said that I should see some of the young Tories. All agreed that the atmosphere required improving but they were helpless. They had no power and no influence and, they might also have added, no intelligence! They suffer from an inferiority complex. They would rather have Lord Linlithgow as Viceroy than have anyone from their own party. They have great awe for Tories and men like Lord Derby who is very rich.

About the Constitution they said, 'You are talking too much about reservation of powers to the Governor-General and you are ignoring the fact that every Constitution in the world has got some provisions for the final authority, and we too have got that in the King.'

At last we parted as friends. I do not think it was a waste of time.

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Of Lord Linlithgow I also attempted a summary:—

LORD LINLITHGOW: Tall, well-built, not brilliant but capable and sound ; no imagination, matter-of-fact, at the same time straightforward, frank and well-intentioned.

I began my usual argument. There were two distinct atmospheres—one in England representing goodwill and sympathy for our future, another in India representing stern and stiff administration. The people in India read the Bill in the light of the Administration there. The natural result of such a position would be a breakdown of the Constitution and further bitterness. The necessity of creating a good beginning to start the new Constitution.

He listened with great interest and said he agreed entirely, but asked if I had any positive suggestion to make. I spoke about personal contact and agreement. He agreed about personal contact but was not in favour of any pact ; he suggested mutual understanding. He said that the die-hards here represented the older school with Indian experience, but that adjustment, almost a new orientation, was taking place in England. New blood, not over 45, wanted to be liberal. Adjustment must take place in India too. It must be realised that there was goodwill and the goal could be reached through the Constitution.

I said it could be, but not without contact. He said that Mr. Gandhi will have to make up his mind on one of two issues. For the regeneration of the Indian nation, which is the better road—a road of personal contact, friendliness and evolution through it, or a bolder step of disturbance and disorder spread over a number of years which may give liberty and result in a setback ?

I replied that Mr. Gandhi has never believed in bloody revolution. I would mind it less, but I knew it would not help us and therefore I also desired association and friendliness. Mr. Gandhi was quite clear on the point and I produced his letter to Agatha Harrison. He read it with interest and said, 'Yes, it is very important. I agree with you but I have no scheme in my head; I will think it over. If anything is not possible I will say so frankly. Meanwhile, see other people and let me know about

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the 10th, when we will have another talk. But since you have expressed your opinion on the method of achieving liberty, allow me to express mine. Bloody revolution would be a bold but bad step. The world is very small now and with the Government's transport facilities and all that it is not so easy to succeed. On the other hand, working the Constitution in a friendly atmosphere would lead to certain results.'

I said that I agreed with the conclusion but not with the argument. Today the Constitution is a body without life. Even the most handsome body without life is only fit for cremation. I want it to be a body animate with real life. Personal contact and mutual understanding alone could infuse such life.

He again agreed, and deplored the fact that the British element in the Civil Service and in trade in India was not representative of the best of England.

CHAPTER XVI

HIGH HOPES IN ENGLAND

DETERMINED to pull every possible string on Gandhiji's behalf, I sought out every one who might be of assistance :—

Sir Austen Chamberlain, the former Secretary of State for India, who had declined the offer of the Viceroyalty; the Archbishop of Canterbury; Mr. Baldwin; Geoffrey Dawson, the Editor of *The Times*; Sir Walter Layton; Mr. Kingsley Martin (the *New Statesman*); Mr. Bone (*Manchester Guardian*); and others. The Tories, who were then in power, and responsible for the *Government of India Act*, were uniformly friendly, and so were the Labour party and the Liberals.

Baldwin was specially enthusiastic about Lord Halifax, for whom he had a great admiration, and it was plain that he regarded my friendship with Lord Halifax as my most important recommendation to himself. He had a peculiar habit of enjoying a hearty laugh without any special reason every two minutes or so, and said that after five years' strenuous work as Prime Minister he had got tired, but that with gaps in between it was a different thing.

Here are my notes on a talk with the late Lord Salisbury :—

Old deaf man. Not much grit or wit, but feels his responsibility. Asked me if I was attached to Gandhiji, to which I said, 'Yes'. He replied he had never had the privilege of meeting Mr. Gandhi. I spoke about his (Salisbury's) opposition to the Bill and remarked that I too disliked it but on different grounds. It was not a sufficient advance, but I said, 'Can't we be friends in the working of the Bill in spite of our political difference?' He asked, 'Are we not already?' I said, 'No. The atmosphere in India just now is full of misunderstanding and hostility.' He replied that he had come in contact with Mr. Gour. 'Doesn't he

represent India ?' I said, 'He could not even find a constituency to stand for the Assembly.' He said, 'Oh yes, I knew that.' He asked me for a concrete suggestion. I said, 'Revive the Halifax spirit.' He said he 'did not agree with Halifax, but what Halifax did Halifax alone could do. He is a charming man. Derby is another charming man, but we do not agree.' I replied, 'And yet you are friends.' He agreed that we could be friends without agreeing on political grounds.

He admired Mr. Gandhi's saintliness, great character and good intentions, but he added, 'The great mistake that you Indians make is that you are confusing these great qualities with experience. England has got the experience of a thousand years behind her. You have none.' I said, 'Our background is far more ancient and creditable than that of England.' He said, 'I do not want to minimise ; your civilisation and philosophy and all that is far greater than that of any other country, but not in democracy. You have yet to learn.' I said, 'Did you not make mistakes ?' He said, 'Yes.' I added, 'Because we are lacking in certain things we need friendship.'

He is a nice man, but I don't think he could be of much use.

Curiously enough, one of my most pleasant experiences was meeting Mr. Winston Churchill, the strongest opponent of the Bill, who had the advantage of delivering his attacks from the Government side of the House. Yet I found him no fire-eater. He asked me to lunch at Chartwell, his country home. Here is my report :—

A most remarkable man. As eloquent in private talk as he is in public speech. It is impossible to reproduce the talk in writing. I was with him for two hours.

Mrs. Churchill is also very interesting, but when her husband talks she simply listens. She was in India only for six hours last year.

Mr. Churchill was in the garden when I arrived and his wife sent for him. He wore a workman's apron which he did not change at lunch, and went out again into the garden wearing a huge hat with a big feather in it. After lunch he took me round his garden and showed me the buildings that he had built and the

bricks that he had laid with his own hands. He also showed me the pictures that he had painted.

The house, its surrounding, its swimming pool, everything is most attractive. The water in the swimming pool is kept warm by a boiler. A pump draws water out of the pool, warms it, filters it and it is then pumped back into the pool. Mr. Churchill said that he lived by writing books. I said to myself, 'The cost of this luxury must be enormous,' but he explained that he spent only £3 a week on it. He did 75 per cent of the talking, the other 25 per cent was divided between myself and Mrs. Churchill. I only occasionally interrupted by correcting him and putting a question or two, but I enjoyed the conversation. It was never boring. At times he showed great emotion. But he is badly informed about India. He has peculiar notions. Villages, he thinks, are entirely cut off in India from towns. I corrected this. No townsman is a pure townsman in India; everyone maintains touch with the village.

Twenty-five thousand men that I employ in my mills went to their villages more than once a year. Therefore, on the roll there were more than 50,000. He thought motor-cars had not reached the villages. I corrected him again. An American car can function on mud tracks so it could penetrate every nook and corner of the country.

He thought that educated men, graduates and politicians, were all in the towns. I again corrected him. In my village, I said, I could produce half a dozen graduates, but of course they only visit the village and never stay there permanently.

He took great pride in calling himself a die-hard. 'A hundred million new souls had come to stay in India during the last thirty years,' he said, 'their maintenance is a problem. Peace is essential for increasing production. So long as we maintained law and order it was all right and yet there were communal riots at Lahore, Cawnpore, Calcutta. Now these riots would increase and thus the masses would suffer.' I told him that in the Punjab there was also a rural party composed of Jats and Mohammedans. Under responsible Government parties were likely to be formed on economic lines. This may improve the situation. The Communal Award had not helped, but in the absence of an agreement amongst us it became inevitable. I did not take such a pessimistic view. He said that he hoped I might prove correct.

He asked what Mr. Gandhi was doing. I explained. He was immensely interested and said, 'Mr. Gandhi has gone very high in my esteem since he stood up for the untouchables.' He wanted to know in detail about the untouchability work. I explained. He was glad that I was the president of the Anti-Untouchability League. Then he asked about Mr. Gandhi's village work. I explained. 'Why has the Indian agriculturist deteriorated in his method of cultivation?' This, he said, was the opinion of Lord Linlithgow. I said, 'Because he has been neglected all along.' 'Well, you have the opportunity now. I do not like the Bill but it is now on the statute book. I am not going to bother any more, but do not give us a chance to say that we anticipated a breakdown. The die-hards would be pleased if there was a breakdown. You have got immense powers. Theoretically the Governors have all the powers, but in practice they have none. The King has all the powers in theory but none in practice. Socialists here had all the powers when they came into office, but they did not do anything radical. The Governors will never use the safeguards. So make it a success.' I said, 'What is your test of success?' He said, 'My test is improvement in the lot of the masses, morally as well as materially. I do not care whether you are more or less loyal to Great Britain. I do not mind about education, but give the masses more butter. I stand for butter. As the French King said, "fowl in the pot". Oh, yes, I am every time for butter. Reduce the number of cows but improve their breed. Make every tiller of the soil his own landlord. Stop the best breed from being slaughtered. Provide a good bull for every village. You have a good Viceroy. Tell Mr. Gandhi to use the powers that are offered and make the thing a success. I did not meet Mr. Gandhi when he was in England. It was then rather awkward. My son, though, met him. But I should like to meet him now. I would love to go to India before I die. If I went there I would stay for six months.'

He asked me whether Mr. Gandhi wanted to wreck the constitution. I said, 'Mr. Gandhi is indifferent. He believes that political liberty will come through our own efforts and that our political progress will depend entirely upon us. He is therefore engaged in uplifting the people. A constitution does not interest him much.' He agreed. He asked if he came to India would he be well received. I said, 'I can assure you on that point.' He

said he did not want to go until Lord Willingdon had left India, but he would love to go after that. He said, 'I am genuinely sympathetic towards India. I have got real fears about the future. India, I feel, is a burden on us. We have to maintain an army and for the sake of India we have to maintain Singapore and Near East strength. If India could look after herself we would be delighted. After all, the span of life is very small and I would not be too selfish. I would be only too delighted if the Reforms are a success. I have all along felt that there are fifty Indias. But you have got the things now ; make it a success and if you do I will advocate your getting much more.'

* * * *

To clarify my own views, I made a summary of what I had been saying and sent a copy to Lord Halifax. Here it is:—

SOME POINTS ABOUT THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN INDIA

The Irwin-Gandhi Pact was a great step towards binding India and Great Britain together. This created a precedent. *It struck at the roots of the method of securing political advance by means of disorder, and substituted the method of mutual discussion and confidence.* Its implications, however, were realised by few except the two authors. Hardly had the ink dried on the paper before both left the country ;* had they remained in India the Pact would have lived. Both the rank and file of Congress and Government circles misunderstood this Pact from the beginning. Congressmen knew how to fight, but not how to compromise. Official circles never concealed their dislike of the 'agitator'; discussion with him amounted to lowering of prestige. The pact, therefore, created disaffection amongst both on different grounds, and was given a burial by both at the first opportunity.

Then followed the second struggle and Ordinance rule. Congress was suppressed. A reaction against Gandhism followed. This, unadulterated, stands for non-violence, truthfulness and conversion of the heart of Englishmen brought about by self-suffering. Hatred is supposed to have no place, though there was in fact plenty of it ; for Gandhism was never adopted, in its pure

* Gandhiji went to London to attend the Round Table Conference.

form, by the civil resisters. The radicals exploited it—but had no faith in it. Their object was political freedom; the means were immaterial. ‘Defeat’ of the Congress thus created a new force with a different creed.

After the ‘Fast Unto Death’ and the Untouchability crusade, the situation crystallised. The radicals (doubting the efficacy of Gandhism) drifted towards the left, while another important section of opinion began to doubt the wisdom of boycotting the Legislatures. At this stage, Gandhiji realised that the ‘Parliamentary mentality had come to stay’; also that violence had crept into Congress ranks under the guise of non-violence. He therefore withdrew Civil Resistance and set himself to the task of the reform of the Congress by concentrating on the eradication of social, religious and economic evils in connection with Harijan and Village work. Gandhiji has always believed that Swaraj would come from within, not from without. Realising that his views could be imposed, but might not be assimilated, Gandhiji, rather than enforce his views, retired from active membership of the Congress.

The dissolution of the Assembly gave the ‘parliamentary mentality’ group a fresh impetus. The radical element disapproved of the move, believing that it would divert mass attention from the programme. But they could not resist. Elections took place and Congressmen were returned in large numbers to the Assembly. The spirit and speeches of Mr. Desai (the Congress leader in the Assembly) were appreciated by the Home Member—but the ‘human touch’ never came. The Government lost a good opportunity when it failed to recognise the unconscious attraction towards personal contact and mutual understanding. By the end of the session the speeches of the opposition became more and more irresponsible. The failure of Congress M.L.A.s to sign the Viceroy’s visiting book, caused personal annoyance to Lord Willingdon. The gulf widened; the radical element gathered strength. When the Congress Working Committee met at Jubbulpore recently this section (the Congress Socialist Party) openly revolted against the parliamentarians when the work of the Assembly was under review. Many radical resolutions were presented and a nominal victory secured; the situation was saved only by the tact and wisdom of the right wing—particularly of Mr. Rajagopalachariar. The right-wing Congressmen are thus fighting against two forces—the

Government and the Socialists. The latter are making a direct attack by discrediting the leaders for having 'achieved nothing'. The Government is helping the Socialists indirectly by ignoring the right wing ; between the two the right wing is being crushed. The result may be either the retirement of the right-wingers, leaving the field free to the Socialists, or the adoption of some extreme programme in respect of reforms in order to carry public opinion. *This is the effect of the present atmosphere on the right wing of the Congress. The effect on the Moslems* of the present atmosphere is that they are led into a belief that their worst actions will be condoned. Recently a resolution was passed at a public meeting in Multan that a certain Hindu should die because he criticised the Prophet. The police immediately came to hear of it, but the Hindu was murdered before he could be saved : a dangerous situation likely to have far-reaching results. When the Government take drastic action as was taken in Karachi, there is serious reaction.

The Civil Service is also affected by the atmosphere. The attitude of mind that regards every popular movement with suspicion or opposition may result in grave trouble in the future. Constructive work in such an atmosphere becomes impossible ; the Government is busy maintaining law and order—the people with resisting the Government.

And finally the recent decision of the Government to disallow trusted Indian leaders to visit Quetta has caused the deepest resentment all over India and added a new factor to the already tense situation.

In this atmosphere the new constitution for India will be launched—with no personal contact, no mutual trust.

In England genuine sympathy and goodwill exist towards India. It is sincerely believed that the constitution is a real advance ; that it will give great powers to Indians and ultimately lead India towards her goal. *This sincerity is realised in England ; India is unaware of it.* There the proposals are looked upon as a retrograde step, for no Indian believes that any partnership could exist unless accompanied by mutual trust, friendliness and personal contact. Indians reading the Bill and interpreting it literally, see, for example, the tremendous powers reserved to the Viceroy and Governors. Only in a friendly atmosphere could

they accept the explanation that every constitution contains some provision for a corrective authority.

If the new constitution is to work successfully to the advantage of both countries, it is imperative that something be done immediately to change the existing atmosphere. *A new spirit must be created; the spirit that dominated the Irwin-Gandhi Pact must be restored.*

Sensible Indian men and women realise their need of British help; they want British friendship. The question therefore is—how to secure this, bearing in mind the Government's position and prestige on the one hand, and the position and the self-respect of the Indian people on the other.

With this in view I venture to make the following suggestions :—

1. Establishment of personal contact should be the first step with a view to developing it and getting some mutual understanding. To avoid embarrassment and unnecessary speculation the meeting should take place informally and on a non-political issue.
2. This contact should be developed. An effort should be made to get mutual understanding. If it is thought that success may not be achieved at Delhi, then a man like Sir John Anderson should tackle the questions.
3. If the finishing touch is to be given by the next Viceroy then the ground should be prepared in the time in between so that the gulf may not widen meanwhile.
4. As the best atmosphere is to be found in England, is it possible to get Mr. Gandhi on some other mission to England? He was invited in 1929, I think, either by some Church people or by some University.
5. Is it possible for the Secretary of State or the next Viceroy to go to India next cold weather as the head of some of the Commissions likely to go there?
6. Over and above that, is it possible to exchange views through a third person with a view to making suitable declarations from both sides? In that case, personal contact would follow after the declarations are made.

In his reply Lord Halifax said that he was sending a copy of this to the future Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow.

Lord Linlithgow I met several times again, and before leaving I sent him a note, in which I said:—

There are one or two more points which I wish to submit to you. The new Viceroy will have to work hard to create an atmosphere and he may require someone to help him who could take an unprejudiced view. I wonder whether the new Viceroy should not take with him his own private secretary, as Lord Willingdon did.

After the new Viceroy has established personal contact some points are bound to crop up for consideration, and I am putting them forward so that your mind may seek the solution.

(1) Release of non-violent political prisoners. (There are not many but there are some, like Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Pandit Nehru. The latter probably will be released very soon).

(2) Return of the confiscated land. This point was conceded in the Irwin-Gandhi Pact, but with the breakdown of the pact everything receded into the background. Congressmen would find it difficult to enjoy office while leaving their co-workers in the lurch.

(3) The question of terrorists will have to be solved. Some scheme will have to be found to get rid of terrorism effectively. On this point the Congress and Government are on common ground, but their methods are not common. The Congress want to kill terrorism more by conciliation than by punishment. While the Congress should not exclude punishment from their *modus operandi*, the Government, in my opinion, should not exclude the method of reconciliation. I visualise the creation of common ground for the Government and the Opposition and thereby a way to meet terrorism effectively. The release of Mr. S. C. Bose is a step in the right direction, and I think his brother Mr. Subhas Bose, too, could be handled properly. It would not be beyond the ingenuity of Sir John Anderson to find a formula.

I am writing all these things for your consideration, because some day you will have to give serious attention to these matters and you may like to think ahead.

Thanking you for your courtesy and good wishes,

Yours sincerely,
G. D. BIRLA

HIGH HOPES IN ENGLAND

On the whole I left England with high hopes, much cheered by a note from Lord Lothian, in which he assured me that the new Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, would arrive in India with a definite mission to establish personal contacts with our national leaders.

CHAPTER XVII

RETURN TO INDIA

IN September 1935 I returned to India and immediately went to Wardha to stay with Gandhiji and give him a first-hand report of my impressions. Naturally he felt that the friendliness I had experienced in England did not yet prevail in Government circles in India, but all the same he asked me to write to Lord Linlithgow and others that he would advise the Congress to make no new commitments about the Reforms before the latter's arrival in India, and he promised to use his influence to that end. This was good news indeed. Expressing his delight, Lord Lothian made some comments which are worth recording :—

Government is a very difficult business. Aristotle and the Greeks regarded it as the greatest of the arts. People can only learn how to govern by assuming responsibility and testing their ideas by practice. I believe the whole future of India now turns upon whether or not her young men and women throw themselves into the elections in order that they may assume responsibility for government, first in the Provinces and then at the Centre. It is only in this practical work that they will develop their political muscles and the kind of character and ability that will enable them to deal with the fundamental problems which confront India, whatever constitution she has—communalism, poverty, minorities, the princes, the power of property and so on. I venture to send you a copy of *The Twentieth Century* in which I give my reasons for thinking that the fundamental change of heart, on which the Mahatma has always insisted, has taken place here and that real responsibility for Indian Government will rest on Indian shoulders. I wonder if you would send it on to him, after you have read it, if you think he has not seen it.

If after having trained their muscles in the constitution Young India finds that the constitution itself prevents them from achieving the reforms which matter, they will have both a case for demanding revision, or if it is denied, for taking more direct

action, and the experience and training in practical government they have so gained may enable them to achieve success and good government for India as the outcome. But if they now go in either for civil disobedience and non-co-operation or for violent revolutionary methods, they will fail to learn how to govern in a liberal and constitutional way and get confirmed in those rigid and dictatorial methods which are wrecking Europe by destroying individual liberty, replacing individual thinking by mass organisation, and leading the world back to war, and which will certainly divide and lay India in ruins. I am certain that if the new India shows practical capacity to give India good government, as the young Dominions did, full power will pass into its hands, as easily and inevitably as elsewhere. The main thought in Britain today is not to retain control over India, though it wants to trade with it, but whether India can become self-governing without plunging into catastrophe. Directly British public opinion feels that the political leaders of India are getting a grip on their problems of Indian government and reform in a practical and sagacious way the safeguards will disappear, as they have in Canada and Australia. From every point of view, therefore, the immediate necessity is for Congress and its rivals to take hold of provincial government and make a success of it and from there go on to do the same by the Centre.

Linlithgow himself wrote :—

My own strong impression is that opinion here has moved a long way in the past ten years in the direction of sympathy with Indian aspirations. I am sure that it is very necessary to make full allowance for the fact that the mass of opinion can only move at a certain speed. The older generation, which is commonly the generation in charge of affairs, and which leads public opinion, cannot be expected to accommodate itself to new circumstances and points of view as easily as those who are younger. Indeed, the average man does not easily adapt himself to new circumstances after the age of 45. These considerations apply, of course, with equal force to those in both countries and to men of every race. Great patience will be required and the courage to stand undismayed against disappointment if, in the earlier stages of any endeavour, good results do not immediately emerge.

I must needs make the best I can of the new constitution ; and so far as I am able, my anxious concern must be to make it possible for men and women of all shades of political opinion to work within its bounds. Probably you would agree that the wisest cannot hope at this time to gauge with exactitude the manner in which in all its bearings, the Constitution will affect the political situation in India. My own feeling therefore is that whatever may be our present opinions, we shall all of us do well to suspend final judgment until in the event the picture clears a little.

Meantime, as you, I think, already know, I shall be found most willing to play my part in endeavouring to fortify and extend that spirit of mutual respect and mutual confidence without which no happy outcome can be expected, and to make and maintain those relations of personal friendship which so often serve to ease the burden and to lessen the difficulties of public life, and which are therefore of the utmost value and importance.

But alas! all these fair hopes were soon to be clouded over. Lord Linlithgow had not reckoned with the tremendous opposition he would have to face from the vested interests of die-hard British businessmen in Calcutta and also in Bombay, though there to a lesser extent. When he paid his first visit to Calcutta all the Europeans were immediately up in arms against him because he refused an invitation to dine with the purely European Bengal Club and accepted one from the Calcutta Club, which had a mixed membership. Nor had he reckoned on the unhelpful attitude of some of the high officials on whose advice and co-operation he was inevitably largely dependent. These men, though, true to their service tradition, meant to carry out loyally the intentions of the British Government and Parliament and the spirit of the Act, were influenced in a contrary direction by a number of factors. First there were the die-hard views freely expressed amongst the businessmen, with whom they closely associated socially. Indeed it could be remarked that, whereas some of the businessmen of fairly humble origin were anxious that their sons

should enter the I.C.S. or the Indian Army because they regarded this as a rise in the social ladder they wished to climb, officials, on the contrary, besought their business friends to take their sons into firms in order that they should have more prosperous financial careers than fell to the average official. The raging Terrorist campaign which had marked the summer of 1935 and had been launched in violation of the Irwin-Gandhi Pact had also inevitably stiffened the backs of both the officials and the businessmen. This campaign had been conducted during Gandhiji's absence from India, though such Bengal Congress stalwarts as Dr. B. C. Roy and Mr. Nalini Sarkar publicly disassociated themselves from it. Yet another main influence was the former Viceroy's openly expressed distrust of Gandhiji. The rumour ran that he had characterised Bapu as a 'humbug'. This view permeated both official and business circles, for they argued that, whereas most of them had never met Bapu, Lord Willingdon had and must know what he was talking about. A notable exception was Sir Herbert Emerson. It had fallen to him to attempt to carry out the Government side of the Pact. This necessarily involved meetings with Bapu, with the result that both men liked each other very much and confidence grew between them. But the officials as a whole did not believe in Gandhiji's sincerity, were privately highly critical of the new Viceroy, and were particularly incensed because he brought out with him his own Private Secretary, an official from the India Office. The post of Private Secretary they jealously regarded as a perquisite of the I.C.S. and a natural stepping-stone to a governorship.

One more unfortunate fact must be mentioned, and that is the cumulative effect of all these influences upon Lord Linlithgow himself. They gradually so affected him that, although he clung to his original attitude sufficiently long to succeed in persuading the Congress to work the Act, accept office and form Governments under

the provincial autonomy scheme while he himself entered into friendly relationship with Gandhiji, nevertheless, when war broke out with Germany in 1939, he had become so distrustful about Indians in general and the Congress in particular, that from the outset he resolutely rejected all suggestions for the formation of a National Government and a common war effort. This seemed all the more contradictory and absurd because he himself and the British Government whom he represented, had been pursuing a policy of appeasement in fawning upon Hitler, whereas Indian public opinion had throughout been anti-Nazi though not anti-German. Moreover, Indian opinion had manifested itself as strongly pro-Chinese and had condemned all Japan's aggressive actions in Manchuria. At Mr. Nehru's instigation the Congress had organised an ambulance unit and sent it to assist the Chinese. The British in India, on the contrary, seemed intent only on their trade interest, shut their eyes to all possibility of a Hitler-Japanese combination to invade India, and busied themselves with shipping from Calcutta to Japanese ports cargoes of pig-iron which later came back in the form of bullets in the breasts of Indian and British soldiers.

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Here is a letter which shows Bapu's clear and simple method of dealing with financial problems :—

Segaon, Wardha,
4-7-36.

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

I did not ask Mahadev to write about the museum. In fact I had asked him to write about the other buildings. You might recall that while enumerating my needs I had said that Rs. 1,00,000 would be needed for the other buildings. Subsequently, the Vidyalaya was included among the buildings, though at the time when the figure of Rs. 1,00,000 was mentioned I had kept the matter of the Vidyalaya separate because I was thinking of erecting buildings at a cost of Rs. 1,00,000 in addi-

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tion to the Vidyalaya building. But there is not enough money in the funds or in the reserve to defray the expenses incurred on account of the Vidyalaya. I was under the impression that you have sent a certain portion of the amount of Rs. 1,00,000 to Bachchraj & Co. Now I learn that nothing has been credited under this head. That is why I wrote a letter to you at Trivandrum. Presumably you did not get that letter. If it is possible to take out any amount from that Rs. 1,00,000, this may be done.

I have written a letter to Dr. Moonje. You might have received a copy.

What arrangements have been made with Parnerkar?

With Bapu's blessings.

* * * *

The next letter, from Mahadev, throws some interesting light on Bapu's mode of life at this time.

Maganwadi, Wardha,
20th Aug., 1936.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

I am sending you under separate post a copy of the proceedings of the Vishva-Bharati Samsad. You will be glad to hear that the 'anonymous'* donation of Rs. 60,000 has helped them to pay off the old debts and for once their budget seems to be balanced. How long it will continue to be so, we do not know! Did you have a nice time in Kashmir?

I deliberately refrained from writing to you on the subject of that historic interview. These things do not bear discussion through correspondence.

I am looking forward to your arrival here some time next month. Perhaps the weather will be more propitious to you than it was to Pandit Jawaharlal who was here last week. He had to walk part of the way in rain and mud. Bapu is getting more and more absorbed in his village work and feels no inclination to give any time to correspondence or to writing. Three or four weeks ago he finished writing his statement on socialism, but he has not yet found a moment to revise it. Of course, he had collected a number of friends in that little one-room tenement of his, and problems arising out of their illness naturally occupied

* I was the anonymous donor to the poet. This donation that I gave to the poet has a touching history behind it which need not be repeated here.

the bulk of his time. That, however, is not the whole fact of the situation. The fact is that he is turning his mind off from the Congress and all other outside activities and reverting it entirely on the village and its problems. That, he says is his *sadhana*, and he is loath to having it interrupted by any other programme. He received pressing letters from Sir P. T. asking him to go to Bombay to receive the South African deputation, but he resolutely said, 'No'. He is booked to preside over the Gujrat Literary Conference in early November in accordance with a promise he gave about a year ago, but he is thoroughly disinclined even to keep that promise and wishes that something or other may turn up to prevent him from going! Perhaps when you are here, you will be able to have a correct insight into his present mood.

I hope you are well.

Yours sincerely,
MAHADEV

CHAPTER XVIII

THE LINLITHGOW REGIME

LINLITHGOW was no stranger to India, as he had been Chairman in previous years of the Royal Commission on Agriculture, and in this capacity had visited every part of the country from Kashmir and Peshawar to Cape Comorin. He had a reputation as a farming expert and my first contacts with him when he came to India as Viceroy were chiefly in regard to bulls and cows. One of my problems was to get a good breed of cattle in order to provide milk for the children at my big educational experiment at Pilani in Jaipur. During my stay in England I bought a Holstein bull but the results were not satisfactory. One of my ideas was that the return fare for milch cows sent to the large towns should be regulated so as to make it more attractive to send a good breed back to their original homes rather than allow them to go to the slaughter-house when they went dry. At my instigation the Viceroy inquired closely into the matter but officialdom was too much for him at this, the outset of his new career, and the Railway Board turned down the idea. The Viceroy, however, was not completely defeated as the Railway Board agreed to introduce a special return rate of 6 as. a mile per four-wheeled vehicle for cattle freight from any north-western station to Howrah, provided the return was completed within a period of nine months. But as I had pointed out in the letter to the Viceroy, most of the cattlemen were illiterate and would not purchase return tickets, so that it would have been better to have a uniform charge for sending cows to Calcutta, with a free ticket for return in nine months. This would leave no option to the sender who would have to purchase a return ticket, which could be sold along with the cow to anyone interested in bringing it back.

On the 5th of August, 1936, for the first time after our meetings in London, I met the new Viceroy and had an interview for almost an hour. My notes on this occasion reveal a picture of a well-intentioned, honest man, struggling with his environment, like a swimmer trying to swim upstream against a powerful current, the strength of which he had never previously gauged and which was bound eventually to carry him away.

I admit that I did most of the talking. I reminded him that I was told by Zetland, Halifax, Lothian and Hoare that Gandhiji should make no new commitments until he met the new Viceroy. I had given their personal messages and my own impression to Gandhiji. He found it difficult to accept the cheerful view that I took, and yet he promised to see that at the Lucknow Congress no new commitments were made. I said that Lord Willingdon had taken an active part in spreading a scare about his successor seeing Gandhiji. Linlithgow was evidently only too well aware of this and agreed. Clearly he already sensed hostility in the atmosphere surrounding him.

‘Gandhiji has kept his promise,’ said I. ‘I do not know whether you still have the desire to break the ice and establish the personal touch or whether you have changed your views. I pressed my point strongly in London but I shall not do so any more now. After all, when we met in London you had no first-hand information whereas I had. Now you have the same advantage as I have. You know my views and I hold them as strongly as ever. If you think that you should break the ice and take some step, then please advise me as to how I can help. On the other hand, if you have changed your views and decided to continue the same old policy, I think it will be a great mistake, and I have no more to say.’

He thought over this for a moment and then asked : ‘What is the relation between Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Nehru ?’ To this I replied, ‘One needs to understand the temperaments of the two men. There is a tremendous difference between their outlooks and ideas. But this does not prevent their mutual attachment

which is as strong as ever. So long as Mr. Gandhi lives, there is no danger—so far as I can see—of any split in the Congress.’ He replied, ‘I agree’, and asked, ‘Is Mr. Gandhi going to finance the elections?’ I replied, ‘I don’t think so. It will all be done by the Congress, and so far as I can see they will be returned in a majority in five provinces.’

Then he said, ‘I must tell you very frankly that when I arrived here there was a great panic in official circles. I had a full talk with Sir Henry Craik. I fear it is not possible for me to take any step just now. I recognise the Congress is a very strong party and it may be returned in a majority in many provinces. I admit that the Congress has created a spirit of self-respect and nationalism among people and is largely responsible for bringing about a constitutional change in India. But there are other important parties too. And if I try to be overfriendly with the Congress, then I would be putting the other parties at a great disadvantage. And this might give undue weight to the Congress election. I may be charged with partiality. As representative of the Crown therefore it would not be fair for me to do anything that might savour of partiality. There is, besides, another point. What can I say to Mr. Gandhi today? I do not wish to play with him. I cannot change a comma in the *Government of India Act*. I cannot release the prisoners in Bengal. Then what am I to talk about? Of course, if any distinguished person wants to see me, I am always ready to see him; Pandit Malaviya saw me, you have seen me. But if I specially invite Mr. Gandhi I fear there will be no justification in doing so.’ I said, ‘I quite appreciate your point. Gandhiji would not ask for an interview at present. Not that he stands on any ceremony. If you express a desire to meet him, he will at once write for an interview. But left to himself he has nothing to say. I am not a Congressman, and so when I have to explain your position to Congress and the Congress position to you, I feel myself at a disadvantage. I wonder why you do not seek the opportunity yourself of seeing a Congressman like Gandhiji to discuss Congress politics. Then you can get first-hand information about their attitude and *vice versa*. Of course, I never suggested that it was possible to change the *Government of India Act* at this stage, but there are a lot of other things that could be done and should be done. Cannot a common formula be found on terrorism? There are so many

other things which can be done. I don't think the Government today is impartial. Immediately Khan Sahib is released, he is banned from entering the Frontier and the Punjab. Assume that Khan Sahib is going to be one of the ministers. You are simply depriving him from carrying on his electioneering campaign. It is not fair. This is neither fairness nor impartiality. By removing all these unfairnesses the atmosphere could be improved but as I have already said I have pressed my point enough. Now you will decide for yourself.' But I asked, 'Do you think the position will be different from what it is today after the election is over?' He said, 'Oh yes, tremendously. After the election it will be a different picture altogether. I hope to make a substantial contribution after the election is over but I do not make any promises. We do not know what the position will be after the election and what step we might have to take.' Then he said his information was that Congressmen were trying to avoid office because if they did some constructive work and had to tax people for education and other things, they might become unpopular. I said, 'Your information is absolutely wrong. I have not the slightest doubt that if there was a proper understanding and a good atmosphere, and if the Congress accepted office, they would not hesitate for a moment to impose new taxation on those who are capable of paying for education, sanitation and all that. In fact, it would only increase the popularity of the Congress.' He accepted my point of view but said that he was told this by a Congressman. But then he said, 'If I met Mr. Gandhi and said, I can do this and I can do that and I would put a most liberal interpretation on the Act and even take risks. Would you accept office? I have not the slightest doubt that he would say, No.' I said, 'Your Excellency, you are assuming too much.' He said, 'Do you think he will agree to acceptance of office?' I said, 'Yes, provided he is convinced that there is an atmosphere for doing constructive work for the good of the masses. Gandhiji has been a constructive worker throughout his life and therefore acceptance of office by Congressmen would not frighten him in the least. Of course, there has to be the right atmosphere.' Then I again said, 'I know your views now and I will forward them to Gandhiji. I am so glad that you have put things so clearly and so frankly and I shall no longer pester you any more on this point. If at any time you want my help I am

at your disposal, but as you now have the advantage of studying things for yourself, I shall say nothing. Of course, I do not agree with your conclusion but that does not matter.'

Then we talked a little about cattle breeding. He said, 'It would satisfy my conscience if I could put something in the pocket of the cultivator. I do not care what people think of me if I succeed in doing this.' He again said, 'Tell Mr. Gandhi that nationalism is not a crime in my opinion and I am capable of taking honest views.' Then he added, 'You don't know how much panic there was in official circles when I reached India.' I told him that I knew all about it and had even warned him in my letter to him. He said, 'I did not think it was as bad as that.'

I need not add that there was a thorough cordiality throughout the conversation and I still stick to my views that he is a good, honest man. He has been entirely forced to abandon his ideas and although he still aspires to take some step after the election he will not make any promise. When I said I hoped to see him again he said, 'Do not come very often to me or else it might be construed that you were trying to influence me too much. But write whenever you wish, even though I may disagree with you.'

On top of this interview a letter came in from Lord Lothian. In my reply I wrote :—

It was refreshing to hear from you that your impression is that 'the Viceroy is determined to break through formality and apply the personal touch.' As yet, I have seen no signs of it. I met the Viceroy the day before yesterday and found there was nothing doing.

When I returned to India I found Lord Willingdon had already set the ball of scare rolling about what the new Viceroy was going to do. 'The new Viceroy is going to see Gandhi and will change the old policy.' As if in case Gandhi walked to the Viceroy's House, the heavens would fall! An inspired telegram appeared in the *Morning Post* and on the heels of it Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru showed your letter to friends and pressmen in which it appears you said something about my having got a promise from Mr. Gandhi not to make any new commitment until he saw the new Viceroy. All this was fully utilised by those against the personal touch. Even the *Hindustan Times* through

its Bombay correspondent was duped into printing a silly story about Lord Halifax corresponding with Gandhiji.

The Services who, I always feared, were strongly opposed to any move towards the personal touch between the head of the administration and the opposition, nursed the scare with its absurd implications and, when Lord Linlithgow arrived, he found the atmosphere full of panic and alarm. I do not know what he did and how he thought, but the fact is that he has abandoned the idea of a personal touch for the time being. My own feeling is that his hands are forced.

Probably he has been advised that if he did anything before the elections are over, he might thereby help the Congress. I fear he has been grossly ill-advised. The personal touch is only a means. The whole question is, 'Should we make a serious effort to direct the energies of India once for all towards constitutional channels?' This can only be possible by ending the 'Police State' as you call it and by creating an atmosphere of mutual understanding which will for a long time to come exclude the idea of any direct action.

It is necessary for the leaders in personal talk to know how far the best of Britain is ready to help India in her onward march; and that the reforms will be worked with the most liberal interpretation, even to the extent of taking risks. All this has to be talked over personally now and not after the elections. The best time for such a move was a year back. The Bihar earthquake gave a good opportunity for joint work and a mutual touch. Now it is slightly worse but after the elections when the Congress comes in with a majority in many provinces, as I think it will, the time will be much worse. If, when the Congress triumphs, the Government tries to show friendliness it will make little impression. On the other hand, I fear that during the elections there may be a clash which will ruin the whole atmosphere. Not all the provincial Governments are taking an impartial attitude towards the elections.

There is another point. Lord Linlithgow has created a very good atmosphere for himself. The scare about his seeing Gandhiji made him rather popular and he has further created a very good impression by his interest in rural matters. The charm may break when the elections are over.

Things are happening for which he is bound to be blamed. Take the case of the Frontier. Abdul Ghaffar Khan has been forbidden to enter the Frontier and the Punjab and yet, if anybody has a claim to control the new Government under the new reforms in the Frontier on account of his popularity, it is Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Virtually he is deprived of his right to conduct his electioneering campaign. Why should we not assume that he is going to be the Chief Minister in the Frontier under the new reforms and that the present Government, by banning his entry, is showing partiality in favour of the present ministers who are fighting against him? So far not a word has been said against the Viceroy. The Congress Press is either maintaining silence or is saying something good. But I fear that this may not continue. I pray it may, but once the atmosphere gets poisonous both sides will find it difficult to become friendly. The situation therefore, in my opinion, warrants no delay.

It was a great disappointment to me that after having gone to England and brought back such a good impression and personal messages for Gandhiji from you and other friends, and after having got Gandhiji to respond, I should have failed in such a manner. But it appears that God's will was otherwise. I am not writing to Lord Halifax as you may like to show this letter to him. I still pray that the Viceroy will realise the necessity of creating a good atmosphere without delay. To some extent probably he is helpless, but whenever he decides to take a bold action he will have to face opposition from his men. I dare say Lord Halifax had the same experience when he invited Gandhiji to talk.

This is the tale of our woes.

* * * *

HOWEVER, the following March when the elections were over, I had a somewhat more hopeful talk with the Viceroy. He said :—

‘I am glad that the Congress has come in with a majority. I am not at all surprised. I knew it. But my men did not know it. I had English experience. I knew that there was no other party in the field. Congress was well organised and could appeal to the public and so they deserved the victory. I am only surprised that in Bombay they are not in a majority. I wish they

could have got ten more seats.' I told him that that was due to Maharashtra where the Congress was not in full touch with the rural population. He agreed.

Then I said, 'What next? You may have heard how the Congress mind is moving. I have come from Wardha and therefore I know Gandhiji's mind. His position is something like this. You people have all along in your public speeches been telling us that we are going to have genuine power. You have put in the safeguards no doubt but you have always said that they are to be treated only as insurance against risk. Now Gandhiji wants to take you at your word and he says unless we try to wreck the Constitution or do something directly against your very existence, don't use the safeguards. Allow us to work.' He said, 'I quite realise the position. In fact, in substance there is no difference between Gandhiji's position and my own. Englishmen are sensible men and after having given this Constitution, if they don't allow the Congress to have full freedom to work the Constitution, where is it going to lead to? If we poke our nose in and create a deadlock, you will go back to the voters and then come back again in a majority. So we don't want to use the safeguards merely for the sake of fun. But if you take office and say, "We are going to wreck the Constitution", then of course the safeguards must be used. I can therefore make any public declaration that you want, assuring my sympathy and goodwill, and you would be astonished to hear what I have told my own Governors about this, but if anybody wants me to say that the safeguards are to be suspended, it is impossible. I cannot do it because I have no power to change the Constitution, and I fear we would be misunderstood, for if anybody says, "Suspend the safeguards," and I say, "We can't," then the whole Indian Press will say that the safeguards are to rule, which is not the fact. So I am anxious about the position.' I pointed out that so far as I understood, Gandhiji did not want the Constitution to be changed, but he wanted a gentlemen's agreement. I said, 'I visualise the provincial Congress leaders being sent for by the Governors, but the former would put forward only the set formula of the Congress to the Governors and the latter would simply say, "No." The provincial leaders are second-rank men except in Madras where we have got Rajagopalachariar.' He interrupted and said, 'I knew you would make this exception.'

I proceeded and said, 'Is it not therefore possible to shift the venue from the provinces to Delhi because then there could be a more intelligent discussion? It would not then be difficult to find a solution.' I further told him that if he met Gandhiji, the latter would put his case in much stronger language than I did, but at the same time, he would be able to find a formula; but I did not know how that position could be brought about. He said, 'It is rather a difficult task. If Gandhi were to come to me today, he could talk only on this particular thing. Six months back he could have come on some different mission, but my men did not advise me to establish personal contact then. If he comes after a week even, the position may be different. But at present what could I tell him except what I have told you.' I said that he was misinformed. Mr. Gandhi was not coming to him, but because Jawaharlal wanted him in Delhi; but I pointed out to him the implications of all that was likely to happen. He himself had to exercise his brain and find out a solution. He said, 'I realise that Mr. Gandhi could not come to see me today, nor can I see how I could invite him. And yet I feel that the difference between us does not exist. I hope he knows this pretty well and that there is no personal misunderstanding between us.' I assured him on that point.

The talk was rather inconclusive because while he was very cordial and in a way radical in his views, which could not have been better expressed, he could not see what he could do. When I attacked the Services and pointed out how in the U.P. and the Frontier Province they actually took sides against the Congress, he did not defend them. He again and again pointed out his satisfaction at the Congress victory. He assured me that he was not going to allow any Governor to use his power; but except for this assurance of sympathy and goodwill which he said he could give even publicly, he did not see how the safeguards could actually be suspended. And at the same time he saw that Gandhiji did not want their constitutional suspension.

About Jawaharlal he said, 'Am I correct in assuming that there is a strong personal affection between Gandhi and Jawaharlal?' I said, 'Yes.' He said he thought that Jawaharlal too had an assured position in the country and asked, 'Would Gandhiji rise against Jawaharlal if the latter disagreed with him

on any compromise ?' I replied, 'Jawaharlal would simply follow him.' He accepted this view.

Then he talked about the Birla College.

Three days later Mr. Laithwaite, his private secretary, said he would like to come to tea for a chat, and on the 17th March I sent my next letter for the Viceroy to him:—

Dear Mr. Laithwaite,

As you have seen, Gandhiji's formula has been finally accepted by the Working Committee and I have no doubt that it will be accepted also by the the A.I.C.C. The onus to state publicly that the Governor will not use his special powers of interference or set aside the advice of ministers rests now on the Chief Minister after he has satisfied himself on this point and therefore this makes the matter much easier for the Governor. It also does not preclude discussion between the Governor and any other important leader whom the Chief Minister may like to accompany him ; which will enable intelligent discussion.

'Within the constitution' is a very important phrase which gives, in my opinion, a counter-guarantee on the part of the Congress that there is no desire to create deadlocks for the sake of deadlocks. If the Governors will be sympathetic, then I hope there should be no difficulty in arriving at a proper understanding. I think this a great triumph for the right wing of the Congress and a counter-response would very much strengthen their hands. I hope His Excellency appreciates the position.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
G. D. BIRLA

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Bapu's personal concern for the welfare of his 'white social workers' is shown in a letter to Rameshwardas, written at a time when there was much of great import to occupy Bapu's mind:—

Segaon. Wardha,
25-6-1937.

My dear Rameshwardas,

Your letter duly reached me. As regards the money, I got

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the information from Messrs. Bachchraj & Co. Nearly Rs. 1,00,000 will go to the Village Industries Association. What you are giving for personal expenses is, of course, separate.

I had secured passages by cargo boat to England for several white social workers through Brijmohan. He is not there now. Whom should I write to in Calcutta? Or will you write and ask if it is possible to send a certain English sister by cargo boat?

With Bapu's blessings.

CHAPTER XIX

CONGRESS TAKES OFFICE

THE following summer I again went to London to negotiate the Indo-British trade pact. I utilised this opportunity also to renew my efforts to dissipate mutual suspicions and arrive at an understanding which would enable the Congress to accept office in the provinces and start the snow-ball of self-government rolling under the rather uninspiring name of provincial autonomy then bestowed on it. Distrust was doing its disastrous work on both sides. Though the Viceroy had come to India intending to meet Gandhiji, he had never yet done so; and on our side I am sorry to say that soon after I reached London I received a letter from Mahadev Desai, Bapu's trusted private secretary, in which he went so wide of the mark as to suggest that Lord Halifax was double-crossing us and was no friend of India. He wrote, 'Are you sure that they are as anxious to help as they profess to be in their letters to you? My information is that it is Halifax who has set his face against any compromise. Once bitten, twice shy, and he seems to be advising the Secretary of State and others that in no case should a pact with Gandhi be repeated.' I replied as follows:—

London, 16th June, 1937.

My dear Mahadevbhai,

I have been talking to friends here and during the conversations have found only distrust at work. There seems to be no fundamental difference in the position. It struck me during the course of my conversations that it should be possible to paraphrase the ideas of both sides in a way which may be acceptable to both, and so I drafted out something. Here it is :—

'In case of a serious disagreement between the Governor and his Minister, even though the dispute pertained to the field of the special responsibilities of the Governor, the Minister and the Governor will first through discussion try their best to come

to an agreement, but if they ultimately fail to do so and it becomes necessary for the Governor to discard the advice of his Minister, he will intimate to the latter in writing that he cannot accept his advice in this particular matter even though the Minister has to resign over it. The Minister in such circumstances will treat the Governor's intimation as tantamount to asking for his resignation.'

It is my intention to put forward this suggestion to the Secretary of State. Of course, I will make it clear that I have no authority to put this forward on behalf of Bapu or anyone else. But all the same I should like to know whether it meets Bapu's point. I thought it did, and so I thought I should press it on the Secretary of State, but in case Bapu thinks that it is not satisfactory, then I should like you to send me a cable immediately on receipt of my letter. The main idea, as I have understood, is that the responsibility of breaking the Ministry should fall on the Governor. I have preserved the idea in this draft.

There is not the slightest truth in the statement that Lord Halifax is against the establishment of the personal touch. This I can say from first-hand knowledge.

I understand the Working Committee is likely to meet shortly. The position here is not unhopeful, and until I find nothing doing here, I hope the Working Committee will not take steps to bang the door. People here are most anxious to get the Congress into office. If there is the slightest hesitation to meet Bapu's point about dismissal, it is because of their distrust about the implications of an agreement. So far I have not come across anyone misunderstanding Bapu. The atmosphere is quite different from what it was in 1935. They appreciate his distrust, but say at the same time, 'Why does he not accept office and find out for himself how far we are likely to help?' Of course, I am representing his views correctly and I have found that they find it difficult to answer his arguments. So let the door be kept open until it is banged on this side; and I hope it will not be banged.

Yours sincerely,
G. D. BIRLA

A few weeks later I got the joyful news that the Congress had accepted office :—

My dear Mahadevbhai,

Reuters just now phoned me that at the instance of Bapu the Working Committee had decided to accept office in six provinces and I was simply overwhelmed with joy to hear this news. I have no doubt in my mind that Bapu has taken the correct decision and no one but Bapu alone could have done this. Of course, I feel that demands have partially been met, but an ordinary politician would not have the courage to make any advance under such circumstances. However, our trial begins now, and here again I have no doubt that with Bapu's guidance, the Congress will not only provide the most successful ministries, but that we shall advance towards our goal.

Tomorrow I am going to meet Lord Halifax and Sir Findlater Stewart, and in a day or two I will again meet Lord Zetland and Lord Lothian. I am thinking of meeting a few other statesmen before leaving this country. I am going to impress upon them that if it was difficult to get the Congress in, it may be still more difficult to retain them, and that if they do not play the game, the Congress will not stay in. I also spoke of the necessity of keeping the Services in check.

Let me tell you, that although Rajaji's letter shattered my hopes, I was not quite unhopeful about the Congress accepting office. First, your complete silence did not kill my hopes. You know you have not written me a single letter after my arrival here, and I said to myself that this could not be accidental, but was done deliberately under the instructions of Bapu. And this could mean only one thing, that you did not want to say anything about the state of Bapu's mind. Perhaps he wanted to wait until the Committee meeting at Wardha was over.

Also please tell Bapu that my health is splendid. In the beginning when I had not sufficient work to do, I tried to take a few lessons in fencing, but then gave them up as the work increased. But I am taking plenty of exercise. Fencing is not a new thing to me, because in my childhood I was not bad in lathi-playing and wrestling, and I just wanted to revive my old practice. But I think it is all useless. I am writing all this because I know it will amuse you.

Yours affectionately,
G. D. BIRLA

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Grosvenor House, Park Lane, London W.1.

8th July, 1937.

My dear Mahadevbhai,

I had a talk today with Lord Halifax and I impressed upon him the great necessity of the Governors and the Services playing the game. I told him that the Congress was not coming in just to work the Constitution, but to advance towards their goal. They could do it either through the Constitution or through direct action. For the time being, they have dropped direct action and have resorted to constitutionalism. If the Governors and the Services played the game, then constitutionalism would prevail, otherwise the Congress would again be compelled to resort to direct action. Statesmanship demanded that the Governors and the Services were made aware of the intentions of Parliament that they have to play the game.

He assured me on this point and said, 'I told you this before also and wish to tell you again that you need have no fears at all on this score. The English character is such that it would adapt itself to the new conditions immediately. Perhaps the Indians in service may take a little longer, but not the Englishmen.'

Perhaps you know that Bapu once told me at Teethal that after the acceptance of office, he would himself ask for an interview with Lord Linlithgow in connection with his proposed visit to the Frontier. When I mentioned this to Halifax, he was very pleased and said that he was sure that Lord Linlithgow too would be pleased to see Bapu and he hoped that there would be no difficulty about his plans.

I warned him that the Congress regime was not going to be smooth sailing. There would be difficulties off and on, and if Lord Linlithgow knew Bapu, he could always call on his advice which would be immensely helpful. He knew this and said that he had no doubt that Linlithgow would take advantage of establishing personal friendship with Bapu. I think perhaps Bapu should now plan ahead.

I was very interested to note the contents of Bapu's letter to Lothian in which he invited him to go to India. I too had spoken to him a few days ago on the same matter and I understand that he is giving serious attention to this. I mentioned this to Halifax and said that not only Lothian but others also should go, so that they could come in closer touch. I suggested

the names of Lansbury and Churchill. He liked the idea. He said that apart from establishing personal friendship, they could act as interpreters and explain British intentions to the Congress and *vice versa*.

Last night, dining with Sir George and Lady Schuster, I had a very interesting talk with Sir George regarding Indian finance.

I told him how we were likely to meet difficulties in respect of finance for advancement of social work. I asked him whether he could make any useful suggestion.

He recommended that I should visit the Scandinavian countries to study conditions there. He also wanted me to see Daniel Hamilton's place. He said he could not do much when he served in India because everything had to be done with a 'money motive'. He said, 'The Banking Enquiry Commission cost the Government of India 29 lacs of rupees. Even in England it would not cost more than a few hundred pounds. In India while the "money game" which is the practice of today, may not be allowed to expand, the "service game" should be expanded, which when fully expanded automatically would obscure the "money game."'

He of course warned me not to talk in theoretical language or else it would frighten the Conservatives in India. But he fully believed that with the inspiration of Bapu, it should be possible to expand the 'service game' and thus what we wanted to achieve could be achieved without increasing our budgets. In other words, he wants to dethrone the 'money standard' and enthrone the 'labour standard'.

I hope you will see in this (enclosed) article from *The Times* the editor's effort to explain the difference between 'combating' and 'wrecking'. So now they have understood the difference.

I was lunching the other day with Mr. Butler. The general impression here has been one of entire satisfaction and I have no doubt that everyone will be helpful and sympathetic towards the Congress. I am also meeting Churchill after some time. Lord Derby has invited me to lunch and Oliver Stanley, another Minister who is now at the Board of Trade is coming to lunch with me. Sir Roger Lumley, the Governor of Bombay, also is coming to dine.

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In the course of these personal contacts I am impressing upon them the point that the Congress has come in not merely to work the Constitution but to march ahead. They must be helpful and not obstructive, and that obstruction in our march would mean compulsion on the Congress to resort again to direct action. But I find everyone here sympathetic, and they assure me that British public opinion will fully support the Congress in advancing towards their goal, which of course they interpret to be Dominion Status. If independence means severing the connection with the Empire, then they are totally against it. In Dominion Status we have the right to secede, and that is quite enough.

Yours affectionately,
G. D. BIRLA

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Grosvenor House, Park Lane, London W.1.
12th July 1937.

My dear Mahadevbhai,

It appears that some of these so-called moderates have already started talking here so as to give an idea that the Congress will not be in office for long. Perhaps this is a case of the wish being father to the thought. They talk like this : 'What will happen if Jawaharlal begins to preach sedition? Will he be arrested? If not, then the Governor must interfere.' All this rot is being conveyed to the politicians and statesmen here, but I don't think it cuts much ice.

I challenged a moderate to tell me what he meant by Jawaharlal preaching sedition? He said he would preach independence. I retorted, 'What is wrong about preaching independence? Has not every Dominion the right to secede? There are members of the Cabinet of the South African Union who are preaching secession from the Empire.'

I am writing all this just to tell you that the so-called moderates don't seem to be genuinely happy that the Congress has accepted office, because if the Congress rules, then their history becomes a closed chapter, once for all. They are still dreaming that they will rule.

* * * *

Sir Roger Lumley (now Lord Scarborough) seems to have been a believer in personal contact. After a talk

with him when he was Governor-Designate of Bombay, I wrote to Mahadev Desai:—

We talked for nearly two hours. He tried to get as much as he could from me about our people. But he specially wanted to see Bapu, and he is very eager that he should know him as soon as he goes to India. Could you tell me how this could be possible? Bapu of course rarely goes to Bombay, but perhaps he will go to see the Governor.

Another important point which he inquired about was whether the Ministers would come to lunch and dine with him whenever invited. I said I could not say anything on this question. I told him that as a matter of fact Bapu was against such entertainments, but whether the Ministers would be allowed to lunch or dine when they were invited was more than I could say, and that the best person to talk to in this respect would be Bapu.

Now as regards your suggestion to go to Lourdes in France, I must tell you that nothing interests me just now except going back to India as soon as possible. But I fear we will be detained here up to the middle of September.

Yes, I will bring your fine tool boxes and science boxes. Please write to me if I can do anything further.

My next report to Bapu concerned an interview with Mr. Churchill:—

22nd July, 1937.

I was lunching today with Churchill at his house and again enjoyed his company for two hours. As usual, he was very cordial and charming, but very ill-informed about India.

Immediately on seeing me, he said, 'Well, a big experiment has begun,' and when I said, 'Yes, it has begun but it will require all your sympathy and good wishes,' he assured me of these, but all the same said, 'It depends entirely on you. You know I have not spoken a word against the Act after the King's signature was put on it, and if you can make this experiment a success, you will reach your goal automatically. You know how democracy is attacked all over the world. It is only Great Britain that has preserved democracy and if you can show by your actions that you can make democracy a success, you will have no difficulty in advancing further. Play fair and we will play fair.'

'What do you mean by "play fair", I asked. He replied, 'Make the provinces contented, peaceful and prosperous. Don't allow violence and don't murder Englishmen.' I said, 'I am simply shocked at what you say. Do you seriously believe that we are going to murder Englishmen?' He was rather surprised at my own complacency but accepted the assurance that India did not believe in violence. I added, 'Even the most extremist Congressman is not anti-British. He is certainly for independence, but this does not mean that one should become anti-British.' He asked whether I could say this about Jawaharlal also. I replied, 'I can. I am a capitalist and he is a socialist and we have got different views on economic and social matters, but all the same, in fairness to him, I must say that he is a great man, very sincere and not at all anti-British. You must go to India to see things for yourself because then you will be of great help to us.' He said, 'Yes, I will go. Linlithgow has already invited me to go but if Mr. Gandhi also desires it, I will go. Give your leader my greetings and tell him that I wish him all success. Don't feel shy of fighting socialism. Accumulation of wealth is a good thing because it creates initiative, but of course capitalists have to be servants and not masters.'

He was very sceptical about the future of the European political situation. For one more year he did not expect any war, but he could not say about the far future. He said, 'The dictators are getting mad and they may do anything in order to preserve their power. Russia is getting less communistic and Germany is getting more socialistic. So they are finding common ground to some extent. England is the only country which has preserved democracy. I started agitating for rearming England because I believe that nations are ruled either by right or by force. Right is the better method of ruling, but you cannot establish right unless you have force. And now we have got force with the help of which we can establish right. Italy is dreaming of establishing an Empire.'

He went on in this mood for a pretty long time. This time he himself suggested that I should keep him well informed about the situation in India and I have promised to do so.

Here are some cuttings which will interest you. The *Morning Post* is simply poisoning people here, but it does not matter so long as we do the right thing.

How correctly Churchill anticipated a war ! For one more year peace, and then no one knew!

Lord Lothian proved himself a good friend to India at this critical period. I wrote to Mahadev (for Bapu) :—

30th July, 1937.

Lord Lothian came to see me last evening and I had a long talk with him about the future. I said, 'Although the Congress has accepted Office, it has not done so just to be satisfied with the present Constitution but to replace it by something which they like. And now that they have done what you wanted, how do you visualise that by working this Constitution they will be able to replace it by something of their own choice?' He replied, 'You should not challenge the Services or communalism for some time, but on other matters of your social programme, you should brook no interference from the Governors. This will in course of time establish conventions and thus provincial autonomy will become complete. As regards the Centre, when the Federation comes, I hope that the Congress will be able to have its own Ministry.'

I pointed out to him that out of 375 seats the Congress would hardly get 100 seats and thus it could not have a majority. To this he replied, 'Even without a majority, the Congress being the largest party will be able to command a majority.' I did not dispute this. Then he suggested we should immediately challenge the Army budgets which will mean discussion with the Governor-General and consequently some say, and finally greater say, in the question of Army budgets. I asked, 'How will this give us control over the Army or Foreign Affairs? You have claimed that the Constitution contains within itself seeds of automatic growth, and now you have to prove how we shall get what some of us call Domination Status.'

He had to admit that without a new Act it was not possible. Then I told him what I visualised. I agreed that by tact and persuasion we should establish conventions which, within the next two or three years, would give us complete provincial autonomy. We should see that law and order was maintained and impartiality in communal matters was observed. The Services perhaps would become real servants. This was

satisfactory so far as it went, but I had my own doubts whether we should be able to achieve this position at the Centre even in transferred subjects. I, therefore, visualised that after working the Constitution for two or three years successfully, we should send a small delegation of public men to England who would talk informally with the Cabinet Ministers here, and would tell them that they had done their best to advance through constitutional lines but then they had come to a dead stop because no further progress was possible without a new Act. They should try to persuade the Government here to give them something to their own liking and they should tell them clearly that India could not be satisfied with her present position. And unless there was a permanent agreement there was likelihood of direct action.

Then I asked Lord Lothian whether such a move would persuade the Government here to be reasonable and listen to us. And in order that the Cabinet Ministers and the people here should give us friendly treatment at the proper time, I suggested that we should spend the next two or three years in making the Constitution a success from every point of view and in establishing personal contacts. Eminent persons from England should go to India and *vice versa*.

He said he liked the idea, and he expected that this would make a tremendous impression on the British mind at the proper time, and that perhaps we would be able to get what we wanted through such a course. He said he had written to Bapu and that perhaps in the middle of November he would leave for India. Of course, he said this should be kept private. I asked him if he had chalked out his programme. 'No,' he said, 'I have no desire to make speeches.' I replied, 'I don't want you to make speeches. But what I want to know is whether you will go to India as a guest of the British or as a guest of India.' He said, 'Certainly of India. I will see Gandhiji.' But I said, 'That is not all. You should see as many Congressmen as you can. You should not stay at Government House but you should stay with Indians.'

I asked him whether he would care to stay with me in Delhi and Calcutta. He replied, 'For a day perhaps I will have to stay at Government House, but otherwise I should be delighted to stay with you.' I told him that I had spoken

similarly to Churchill, and perhaps he would go if Bapu invited him. He was very interested. He agreed with me that I should make a similar request to Earl Baldwin.

I pointed out to him that in case there was no advance after two or three years, then India would be compelled to take direct action again. But by direct action Lord Lothian understands nothing but bloody revolution. He cannot conceive of non-violent mass civil disobedience. He thinks that Jawaharlalji is submitting to Bapu because he cannot help it, but at the proper time he will rise and as he does not believe in non-violent civil disobedience, he will lead India to revolution. Young men will follow him. The result will be that capitalists will organise on fascist lines and the peasantry on communistic lines.

Again and again I tried to point out to him that being a European he knew of nothing else but Communism and Fascism, but in India a third line had been adopted with some degree of success and that was a non-violent revolution. I told him that the Congress would not resort to direct action unless they were sure that they would be able to preserve the non-violent nature of their action. But he said human nature was what it was. He could not believe that such a thing could happen.

Then he said, 'Mr. Gandhi is respected because he is a saintly man, but when it comes to fighting, they will all throw him to the winds. Jawaharlal will never submit to Gandhi-rule.' In spite of all my arguments he could not be convinced on this point and said that, at least to understand what I said, he would go to India.

By this mail I have received Bapu's letter in his own handwriting and also yours. I liked Bapu's letter so much that I have sent copies of the same to Lords Halifax and Lothian and also to Churchill. I have also sent copies of his last articles on 'Ministerial Salary' to all the important men.

Please keep me well informed. Although I am going away to the Continent—because in August they don't work here—we have to reassemble about the first week of September. It is most disgusting that we should be kept here cooling our heels. But it cannot be helped.

We get some occasional Press telegrams about India in *The Times* and the *Daily Herald*. But in a way we are

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absolutely cut off, and so I have asked Devadas to send me the *Hindustan Times* regularly.

* * * *

Grosvenor House, Park Lane, London W. 1.

4th Sept., 1937.

My dear Mahadevbhai,

Your letters are something more than interesting. I am like a man in the Sahara, who is in need of water. Devadas, although I asked him, has not yet begun to send me copies of the *Hindustan Times* with the result that I am in a way cut off from India. My son sends me some Press cuttings and I keep contact with the *Harijan*. But all this cannot tell me what you can, and so when I get your letters, I drink deep. And when Bapu writes to me, I find myself in seventh heaven. Sometimes I send quotations from your letters to Lord Halifax and other friends, but recently I have stopped doing so because while India may be very important to me, it is perhaps not so important to them when bombs and bullets are raining in Shanghai and Franco is torpedoing British ships.

Bapu's action in settling the hunger strike of the Andaman prisoners was a master stroke and was very much appreciated here. I have no doubt that the authorities both here and there must have heaved a sigh of relief when they found Bapu coming to their rescue. It appears that he is fast developing a friendship with the Viceroy. But what is most important is that he is showing us the way towards co-operation. He had said so many times in the past that he was dying to co-operate and that non-co-operation was only a step, towards co-operation, and now he is proving it by his actions. I am sure if we can develop strength, there is no risk in co-operation.

Lakshminiwas has been sending me some cuttings of the Indian Press from which it appears that indiscipline is becoming rampant. I very much disliked the peasants in Bihar marching to the Assembly House and occupying all the seats of the Assembly and refusing to vacate them in spite of the request of the Premier. And then the Premier addressed them, and told them all sorts of sweet things without telling them that they were wrong in occupying the Assembly seats and refusing to vacate them. Bapu has rightly written against the demonstration that was made against Raghavendra Rao, but I fear that in course

of time indiscipline will grow more and more unless strict measures are taken. I only hope that the Congress authorities are fully alive to the situation and will take all necessary measures. The rank and file seems to be confusing freedom with indiscipline.

As regards your Secretariat, I am surprised when you tell me that some day I should help you in overhauling it. Am I not ready to help? But when have you asked for my help? I have been quarrelling with Bapu for the last seven years about your Secretariat, but in vain. Every letter has to be written by himself, sometimes with his right hand, sometimes with the left. Your typists are a collection for a museum. I have argued with Bapu about efficiency. He agreed in principle, but when he needed a good stenographer in London and I offered him one, he called Polak's sister to work! In any case, I am ready, Mahadevbhai.

I have not yet ordered the Atlas. As regards the reference books, I am already ordering *The Statesman's Year Book*. Please write to me what other books you need and I will order them. I am also sending a carpenter's tool box for your son.

Yours affectionately,
G. D. BIRLA

Grosvenor House, Park Lane, London W. 1.
8th Sept., 1937.

My dear Mahadevbhai,

Your letter of the 26th was rather disturbing as far as Bapu's health goes, and so I sent you a cable inquiring about him, but as I have not received your reply so far, it has increased my anxiety. The only relieving factor is that there is no mention about his health in the Press, and, therefore, I am taking it for granted that he is better now. In any case the question of his rest has to be settled, and it was only in your last letter that you wrote to me that he had realised the position and was taking more rest. I wonder why in the circumstances his health should have deteriorated.

In your letter you have written that I should come soon and I have cabled you saying that ordinarily I propose to sail on the 7th of October but in case you want me earlier, you have simply to cable and I will come, leaving everything as it is.

Just now I am not making any use of your letters or

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articles because the country seems to be in a great ferment due to the political situation in the Mediterranean and the Far East. Everybody seems to be very busy and I myself fear that in course of time it may develop into something serious. Great Britain swallowed all insults in 1935 when Italy attacked Abyssinia, but now she is in a much stronger position and she will be stronger still after a year. On account of provocation in the Mediterranean and the Far East, she has now begun to take a stiffer attitude and after a year when she becomes very strong, perhaps she will not tolerate any provocation. On the other hand, it seems as if Japan is in a fighting mood, and Hitler wants his colonies back and Italy is also rattling her sword. I wonder whether they are all correctly estimating the strength of Great Britain? If they know that Great Britain will be in a much stronger position after a year, they may perhaps want to see a flare-up now rather than a year hence. On the other hand, there is a definite break between Italy and Russia and how far it will spread no one can say. So you will see, the political situation just now is most precarious and yet it is a fact that Great Britain is not at all eager to fight. Even if there is a fight, she would like to keep out as long as possible, but feelings between the Fascist States and Bolshevist Russia on the one hand, and Japan and Great Britain on the other are very bad.

Yours affectionately,

G. D. BIRLA

CHAPTER XX

1937

I SPENT some time in England in 1937 but the burning questions whether the Congress should accept office in the Provinces, and then whether detenus should be released, pursued me there. The stubborn refusal to take office distressed me sorely. This feeling found vent in a letter to Rajaji, dated July 3, 1937:—

You will, I am sure, appreciate my disappointment at your decision. I am in closer touch with the representatives of England than you, and therefore, I am not suffering from distrust as much as you are. In consequence, I naturally believe that if, like myself, you also came into personal contact, your distrust would vanish into thin air. And the method of coming in contact is the acceptance of office. I don't believe for a moment that after all this clarification from both sides, any Governor will dare interfere. And all my arguments are based on this assumption. I know you dispute this contention, but I have got no other argument against that except that you can try and see for yourself.

I have not yet forgotten the fact that when Bapu went to Lord Irwin's house, he was almost convinced that Lord Irwin was not a straight man, and he went there with a feeling of distrust. But when he returned (I met him before any one else did, because he dropped off at my house to pick me up) the first thing I asked was what he thought of the man, to which he replied that the man was honest. I felt greatly relieved at this. I may tell you even today that distrust is entirely due to a lack of the personal touch. And in our own interest we should establish personal contact. But perhaps Bapu's judgment is more sound than that of any of us and so we must all reconcile ourselves to it although, I must confess, my brain refuses to do so.

While at times I feel disappointed, I also feel that I am amply compensated in having to defend Englishmen before Bapu, and Bapu before Englishmen. It is a very interesting task. I would have no heart to do it, but the more I discuss Bapu with Englishmen and *vice versa*, the more I believe that it is a tragedy that these two big forces in the world cannot combine.

I think it will be a service to the world when they do. And this conviction cheers me up.

No sooner were Ministers in office, than there was a popular demand for the release of political prisoners still detained. Bengal, naturally, was chiefly affected. Writing to Nalini Sarkar from London on September 17th, I said :—

There is one special point on which I want to write to you. You know what Gandhiji has done in respect of the detenus. He has saved every one from great embarrassment, and I have no doubt that the Government of India as well as everyone else is very thankful to him. But now the question arises about the release of the detenus. You know Gandhiji has in a way pledged himself to the detenus for relief; and 'relief' means nothing else but release.

I understand your difficulties, and am not oblivious of the difficulties of a wholesale release at once. But once release in right earnest begins, complete release becomes only a matter of time. After all, I don't think anybody wants to be vindictive. Their internment was in the interests of law and order and if law and order could be assured by their release, then their release becomes necessary.

Gandhiji's health is very bad and he has now identified himself with the release of the detenus. I was very happy when I found that owing to his intervention the hunger-strike was abandoned. But now I see its implications with a little anxiety. I am therefore asking you to kindly do your best—to do as much as you can—to meet Gandhiji's wishes.

I understand Gandhiji appealed to your Ministry and got a very discourteous reply. On the other hand the Viceroy sent him a very friendly reply. Just imagine his getting a rebuff from our own people. Don't you think that you as a Minister have got great responsibilities? Surely you can bring some kind of pressure on the other Ministers.

Would you, on my behalf, request His Excellency to analyse the situation? My main object is to give Gandhiji every chance of creating peaceful conditions and you know he is working day and night for this. You say how he reprimanded the demonstration in favour of the Kakori prisoners. And you know what he has

been saying in and out of season as regards the establishment of a non-violent spirit in the country. And you know and I know that he is not a visionary. Whatever is done now will be most helpful to us as well as to our partners the British, and I have no doubt that Sir John Anderson is a man who can see far ahead. The Viceroy is also in a very helpful mood. Gandhiji is an old man and we will have a lot of trouble after he is no longer with us. But if we can establish traditions of co-operation and peacefulness during his lifetime, it would save India from a great deal of trouble and England from much embarrassment. If necessary, please read my letter to His Excellency but do your best. You should not forget that whatever the nature of your office, you are a Minister, and have responsibilities, which fact I am sure you do realise.

The continued detention of political prisoners in Bengal was a cause of irritation and unrest. Efforts to impress this on the British Government occupied much of my time during the remainder of my stay in England, and on my return I devised a formula which both Gandhiji and Nalini Sarkar accepted, the latter on behalf of the Government of Bengal. It proposed that 1100 of those detained in homes and villages should be released immediately, and those detained in jails should be released in batches over a period not exceeding four months. No one was to remain in jail after 4 months, unless Gandhiji specifically said that he could not get any satisfactory assurance for a particular individual and therefore could not recommend his release. But the Government should accept all Gandhiji's recommendations.

Nalini Sarkar habitually realised his responsibilities and was a true servant of Bengal. Unhappily, Gandhiji became very ill just then and there was no equally trusted arbiter to take his place. The advocacy of violence by some non-Congress leaders greatly complicated the problem of release. Politics in Bengal at this time unfortunately degenerated into a series of feuds, and the local Government, which was then a coalition had to function in an unpleasant atmosphere.

CHAPTER XXI

SOME INNER HISTORY

BEFORE we leave the story of the Congress' acceptance of office in the provinces and the bright prospect that lay before us—only to be shattered so tragically two years later by the impact of the World War—let us look at some of the inner history of how acceptance came about. Bapu himself wrote to me as follows:—

Maganwadi, Wardha,
16th July, 1937.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

I appreciate your surprise at my silence. It was as deliberate as it was inevitable, for there was nothing that I could communicate to you. I could see that the letters Bapu was receiving every day from various parts of the country were making him incline more and more towards office acceptance, but I must also say that Lord Zetland's second speech—I mean the one in which he repudiated the criticism that he had closed the door against conciliation—left a favourable impression on Bapu and it is since that moment that he began to veer round towards acceptance. When Jawahar came to Wardha three days before the Working Committee, Bapu's mind had been made up, and I must say to the credit of Jawahar that it did not prove difficult to persuade him. Throughout the Committee meeting, I am told his attitude was noble and worthy of his best instincts and that was why the whole meeting went off well.

Well, that's a bit of history. I must tell you the spirit in which Bapu has approached the whole question. 'C.R'. asked for Bapu's blessings to be wired to him and his colleagues when they were all sworn in as ministers. Bapu sent a wire but made it clear that it was not for publicity. Here is the text : 'Private. Deepest Prayer has been the spring on which I have drawn for guiding the Committee. You know how my hope is centred in you. May God bless your effort. Don't publish this. I have no right to send a message to members. For that you must ask Jawaharlal. Love.'

In your talks with men like Lord Halifax you may refer to this telegram and even show them the text of it. But more indicative of the spirit in which he wants our legislators to go to the Assembly is Bapu's latest article in the *Harijan*, of which I send you a copy. I should like to know the reaction of the British to this article. You can ascertain it by showing it to them, as they are not likely to read it otherwise. You may perhaps have copies made of it and send them to friends. I also enclose a cutting of C.R.'s speech two days before he was invited by the Governor.

Yours affectionately,
MAHADEV

Some more inner history was revealed to me in a letter from Bapu's faithful private secretary, Mahadev Desai.

Segaon, 18th July, 1937.

Brother G.D.,

I read all your letters with great care. I did not find time to write to you nor have desire to write. And what could I have written? Every moment the situation was changing and mending. Under such circumstances to write was inappropriate. To write to others was necessary because I wanted to be as much influenced by those who wrote to me as possible. How far your letters influenced me I cannot say. But of course I can say this much that the letters received from overseas influenced me less, and what was happening in India influenced me more. You could say that my condition was like that of a woman who was to be confined soon. So many things happen inside the woman who is to be confined. But the poor woman cannot describe them. Now we know what has happened. But I will say this : whatever Jawahar did or said in the Working Committee was simply marvellous. In any case he was high in my esteem, but now he has risen much higher ; and the beauty is that we still disagree !

Our real trouble begins now. So much is good that our future depends on our strength, truthfulness, courage, determination, diligence and discipline. What you have been doing is good. Let the authorities realise that there is no padding in the resolution of the Working Committee. Every word has its meaning and each will be put into action. In the end, what

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has been done has been done in the name of God and with trust in God. Good you will be. Good you remain.

Blessings,
BAPU.

Bapu's articles in *Harijan*, insisting on simplicity and economy (to an extent which our Ministers have found impossible ; no motor-cars !) attracted much attention at this time. In one he quoted at length, as coming from 'an English financier who has held high offices in India', the views of Sir George Schuster which I had written to him concerning the need to replace the money motive by the service motive and the co-operative method.

Fair indeed the future prospect seemed when the Viceroy and Bapu first met:—

Viceroy's Camp, India,
23rd July, 1937.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

It would give me much pleasure if you could find it possible to come and see me in New Delhi when I pass through on my way back to Simla. If this suggestion is agreeable to you, would 11-30 a.m. on Wednesday, August 4th, at Viceroy's House, be convenient?

I have no particular business of a public nature with which to trouble you. But it will be a real pleasure to me to meet you, and I greatly hope that you may find it possible to come.

Yours sincerely,
LINLITHGOW

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Segaon, Wardha, 24-7-37.

Dear Friend,

I thank you for your kind letter.

I had for some time intended to ask for an appointment to discuss the possibility of lifting the ban on Khan Saheb, Abdul Gaffar Khan's entry into the Frontier Province and of my visiting that Province. Of course there is no bar against me but

I had no intention of going there except with the approval of the authorities.

Your letter is therefore doubly welcome. I assume that there would be no objection to my discussing these two points at our meeting. I shall gladly report myself at Viceroy's House, New Delhi, on 4th August next at 11-30 a.m.

I remain,
Yours sincerely,
M. K. GANDHI

Copies of these letters reached me in London in a long letter from Mahadev Desai. After describing the successes already obtained by 'C.R.' in Madras and others, he went on :—

You say Sir Roger Lumley is very anxious to see Bapu, and you ask how this is to be possible. Perhaps he knew the conditions better than you. For the ice has already been broken. And before this gets into your hands the newspapers will have flashed the news that Bapu has seen the Viceroy. Four days ago we were agreeably surprised to find a magistrate of this place at Segaoon, gone there specially to deliver personally to Bapu some important official document. It was a personal letter from Lord Linlithgow inviting Bapu to see him. Evidently he had sent it to the Governor to be delivered personally. I shall tell you Bapu's instantaneous reaction, for this little thing shows how non-violent to the core is Bapu. He said, 'I am sure somebody has told the Viceroy that I should never go to him without an invitation from him, and this poor man will be misinterpreted the moment the world knows that it was he who invited me and not I who sought the interview.' The non-violence in Bapu's nature instinctively rebelled against a possible compromise of the dignity or prestige of the Viceroy. And then he wrote out a reply in his own hand. I enclose copies of both. He would have given some expression of his feeling in his reply, but he refrained from doing so. As he said to me : 'Doesn't he know his own business ? Why should I presume to advise him ? The Viceroy is just now touring in Assam and Bihar and I do not know whether Bapu's letter will be in his hands before he is actually in Delhi. Bapu has raised the question of the North-West Frontier, but we trust it will

create no difficulty. If this interview was meant merely to break the ice how could the Viceroy say more than he has done? But evidently it cannot be all just for the 'pleasure of meeting Mr. Gandhi.' They can't separate after just saying, 'How do you do?' However, it is not very likely that the interview will go on beyond an hour or so. But I must not anticipate. So you have to tell Sir Roger Lumley that he has but to summon Bapu and he will be only too glad to 'report himself'.

What you said to Sir Roger about Ministers accepting invitations to dinners and parties shows your instinctive knowledge of Bapu. Vallabhbhai was here last week to discuss this and various other questions of procedure. You will be sorry to learn that they decided to have nothing to do with entertainments. Accepting an invitation from the Governor presupposes readiness on the part of the Ministers to return the courtesy. How can our poor Ministers indulge in social amenities of this kind? But it is not merely a question of poverty. Bapu feels that at least for some years in the best interests of the country it would be wisest to maintain strictly official relations.

What you say about Churchill is most interesting. When he uttered that sentence about violence and Indians murdering Englishmen why did you not remind him of his article in which he threatened us with dread consequences if we refused to accept office? The cruel word that he used about Bapu's statement still smarts in my memory. Do you know the word? He described those statements as 'Gandhi's barbed-wire blandishments'. But that is Churchill all over. At the time of the Irish settlement it was he who invited Michael Collins to his place and laughed and joked with him and told him that whereas the British Government had set a price of only £1,000 on his (Collins') head, the Boers had set a price of only £10 on his *i.e.* Churchill's head. I am quite sure his greetings to Bapu are perfectly genuine. And you must convey Bapu's thanks to him. In 1931 he declined to see Bapu, but now if he comes to India at Bapu's instance I suppose he will ask for the interview himself.

Soon came the report of the first meeting:—

Viceregal Lodge, 4th Aug., 1937.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

A strange place for me to write from. Is not it? And you

will see that I am not yet familiar with the name, for though I know that the Delhi Palace is called the Viceroy's House it is the Simla one that is called the Viceregal Lodge. Well, whilst Bapu is busy with the Viceroy I am making myself useful, writing a few letters that Bapu asked me to write on our way here. Your dear old chauffeur (I mean the young handsome chauffeur dressed in clothes more spotlessly white than I wear) drove us here, and Bapu was closeted with H. E. at 11-30 a.m. The interview seemed to be more to break the ice, as I told you, than for any specific purpose, and Bapu himself went in determined not to broach any subject of his own accord—excepting of course the Frontier question that he himself had mentioned in his reply to the Viceroy. But I have finished all my letters, it is close on one o'clock and still Bapu is not out: which means that matters of moment are being discussed.

It seems your latest letter to me is awaiting me at Wardha, for Devdas had a copy yesterday and the original must have gone to Wardha also at the same time. I suppose Lord L. knew when he was talking to you that this thing was coming off.

Yours affectionately,
MAHADEV

PS.—This is after the interview. It was quite good, frank and cordial. It lasted for about an hour and a half. The Frontier door is open so far as Bapu is concerned, but not yet for the Khan Saheb who, said the Viceroy, must make a representation to the Governor. Bapu told H.E. at length who the Khan Saheb was and how he could not be expected to make the representation. But he is hopeful that the way will be clear. And now the Frontier Ministry has resigned, so it may be expected that it will be quite all right.

H.E. raised no objection whatsoever about discussing the Frontier question and made no difficulty about Bapu going there.

The other topics discussed were rural uplift, cows, hand-made paper and reed pens and so on.

MAHADEV

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

Wardha, 6th Aug., 1937.

The enclosed summarises the interview. This is exclusively for you and in reply to your letter of the 27th and 28th.

Though the ice has been broken, he does not attach any more importance to it than he would to a friendly interchange of views. The old imperialism still subsists and it may be very long before it yields. Bapu would caution you against setting much store by those 'personal contacts', and he is not at all inclined to extend the invitation he did to Lord Lothian, to Churchill or Lord Baldwin or other friends. If they would come of their own accord they are perfectly welcome, but Bapu would not request them to come. Besides he does not want to assume the status of a Congress Leader, to extend that invitation to them. With Lord Lothian it was a different matter. He had played an important role as a bridge-builder, and he had directly written to Bapu more than once. The suggestion, or if you please, the invitation came therefore in the natural course of things, and out of an instinctive impulse. The Churchills and others may come, talk all kinds of imperialistic nonsense and it would be like giving them a passport to visit India to say all those things. No, Bapu would have none of the personal contact business.

As regards the Frontier question the Viceroy has promised to correspond with Bapu after he has had an opportunity of communicating with the Governor. It is likely that the ban may be raised.

I hope you are keeping well. Have you had all my letters? This is a God-forsaken place and, often enough, letters posted in time do not catch the Air Mail. I have not missed a single air mail. C.F.A. arrives tomorrow—on what errand, I have not yet been able to guess.

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Yours affectionately,
MAHADEV

25-1-38.

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

I shall be needing Rs. 50,000|- for village education, and the same amount for Udyog Sangh. Then there is the burden of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. More talks are needed in this connection. I hope Brijmohan is quite well and so is Krishna.

With Bapu's blessings.

CHAPTER XXII

NEW MINISTERS' DIFFICULTIES

Zurich, 16th August, 1937.

My dear Mahadevbhai,

Your two letters are lying unreplied to. Far from being Rip Van Winkle, you are now giving me the fullest information and I am very grateful to you for this. The copies of the *Hindustan Times* are not reaching me and my connection with the *Harijan* is severed since I left London. So the only news that I get about India is either through private letters or through the British Press. *The Times* has been very kind to us so far and Mr. Inglis always sends complimentary news. The *Morning Post* used to write in a hostile manner but since I took up the question with Churchill and Lord Halifax it has become less unfriendly, which again may be a coincidence.

I am not surprised at the news that I am getting just now. One day I read of some students going on strike if the Education Minister failed to do this or that. Then I read of some match workers going on hunger-strike if the Industry Minister does not settle their demands satisfactorily. The big Cawnpore strike was settled eventually but I read that once the strikers refused to abide by the decision of Pantji. And of course the Andamans hunger-strikes are still agitating the minds of the people.

It looks as if everybody wants to have his own way under the Congress régime. I have no doubt that Bapu is doing all that is necessary to educate public opinion to keep discipline. I shall not be surprised if some day I hear of marches being led to the houses of the Ministers with flags and slogans. Suppression of popular feeling in the past is perhaps now having its reaction and it would not be bad if the steam was allowed to blow out. But what the people must learn is that even under Swaraj they have to be law-abiding, reasonable and disciplined. I have no doubt that in course of time they will learn. But don't you think it is desirable that public education on these lines be undertaken without the least delay?

I did not quite understand why Bapu should have had an incredulous laugh at my telling you that his stock had gone up

very high. I admit that stocks in the money market go up and come down, but as a businessman let me tell you that they don't fluctuate so suddenly as you people think they do. In certain cases where the statistical position is sound there is always a period of continued steadiness and so I was quite justified when I said our administration could last very long. Of course it could not last if we wanted to break, but as this is not our desire, I don't think there is going to be any serious trouble. Neither will the British become angels nor will our Ministers kowtow to them, if our Ministers continue with stability. What is likely to happen is that both sides will make mutual adjustments and perhaps it will be realised that there was a lot of good on both sides which was not appreciated so far. The British are very shrewd men, and can take a far-sighted view. I am glad to hear from you however that in all the provinces the Governors and the Ministers have begun well.

As regards Bapu's decision about the Ministers not accepting social invitations from the Governors, I felt he would be thinking something like that and so I correctly represented his views to Sir Roger. But perhaps it would be better if the Prime Ministers were allowed to have social relations. Then there would be no misunderstanding ; otherwise there is bound to be some. There is justification for making an exception in the case of the Prime Ministers.

I note your remarks about Churchill, but you don't reply to my query whether Bapu would like to have him in India. Don't go by what he says. He is a politician, pure and simple, and I think perhaps his philosophy is to have one policy in public and the other in private. But I tell you that as a man he is full of warmth. There is no vanity about him and he has got a childlike simplicity. He had the honesty to admit to me that when he stood up in favour of the ex-King, he did not know that public opinion was so much against him. I also discussed with him the general position of the monarchy in England and why he was not in the Cabinet. I felt that he is one of the half-dozen persons who rule England and I was impressed with his frankness in private talks. He was very straight in telling me that I should not expect him to write articles in favour of India. He reminded me what politics were.

Your letter from Delhi did not give me much news but perhaps you thought it better to be discreet. I note that you saw the copy of my letter to you with Devadas. I always post one copy to Devadas, one to Rajaji and one to my brother Rameshwarji who shows it to Sardar.

For the first time I learn from your letter that the Frontier Ministry has resigned. So you are going to have seven ministries now.

I sent you the cable about Bapu's health because, besides your own letter, I read in the Press that when he got down at Delhi, he looked very tired. I hope he is fully recovered from the fatigue now. I am not writing to Bapu anything about it because I know nobody can look after his health better than Bapu himself. The only thing is that sometimes he is compelled to overwork and I will talk to him about it on my return.

I entirely agree with you that it was a great mistake for the Sardar and Rajendrababu to have kept out. Perhaps it will be rectified after a year's steady work.

I will bring the books on bee-keeping and Cabinet Government.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

A letter from Sir George Cunningham, the Governor of the North-West Frontier Province quickly followed:—

Governor's Camp, North-West
Frontier Province, Abbottabad,
17th August, 1937.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

I have received a letter from His Excellency the Viceroy in which he has given me the gist of his talk with you on the 4th of August. His Excellency, I understood, told you that he believed there would be no objection to your paying a visit to the North-West Frontier Province, should you desire to do so. I have discussed this with my Ministers, and with their authority I write to inform you that there will be no objection to your visiting the Province. His Excellency, I know, told you that he felt it necessary to ask you to leave all affairs connected with the tribes severely alone during your visit; I understand that you

NEW MINISTERS' DIFFICULTIES

accepted His Excellency's decision in this matter, and I know that you will scrupulously abide by this assurance.

Should there be an opportunity of our meeting, it will be a pleasure to me to renew the acquaintance we made when I was with Lord Halifax.

The question of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, about which you also spoke to His Excellency, is still under consideration by the Ministry. I anticipate that a decision will be reached within the next day or two.

Yours sincerely,
G. CUNNINGHAM

The difficulties of our Ministers did not arise so much from the actions of the Governors, who showed themselves anxious to accommodate themselves to the new situation, as from ourselves. Bapu was much concerned at the violence shown, and the number of place-hunters who quickly showed themselves. Here are some extracts from a long letter from Mahadev revealing the beginnings of trouble :—

The Ministries are functioning fairly well. There is sufficient co-operation on behalf of the officials. I almost suspect they have orders from London to behave themselves and I grant that they are a much more disciplined lot than many of us. Fancy Garret, the Commissioner of Ahmedabad, now going to the station to receive Minister Morarji and travelling a fair distance with him 3rd class. You know the Bardoli and Kaira Auctioned Lands' Dispute ; it looks as though Garret would make no difficulty now, in having the lands transferred back to the original owners. A sub-inspector of police who had been guilty of tyrannical abuse of power in the past committed suicide by shooting himself on the eve of Minister Morarji's arrival in Bardoli. But that is by the way. Rajaji is having the utmost co-operation from the civilians.* There may be some difficulty in poor Orissa. But even that will be temporary.

Our difficulties I am afraid will be of our own creation. We are yet far from being a united house. There are our friends who, benefiting by the new situation, would have strikes every-

* i.e., 'Civil Servants'.

where, and would delight in the Ministries being condemned as incapable of handling situations. Rajaji has released one and all of the political prisoners in his province, violent and non-violent. The last Moplah prisoner was released only the other day. But with what result? Meherali who had been sentenced to six months' imprisonment before Rajaji assumed office, was released by him on the very day he assumed office. There was some difficulty about his release as I had told you in one of my previous letters. But Rajaji succeeded in getting him free, on the very day when his appeal was dismissed. Within two days of his release, this man goes and makes a speech full of fire and brimstone, inciting people to violence. What is poor Rajaji to do? There are half a dozen or more similar prisoners still in Bombay. Theirs is a difficult problem. The Ministers insisted on their being released but not with success. But can they break on this? If we were absolutely agreed on non-violence the question should not be difficult but even as regards the implications of non-violence, there is a gulf between Jawaharlal and Bapu. The last meeting of the Working Committee was an exceptionally difficult one in view of the problems I have mentioned. But everything ultimately ended well.

On the other difficult questions too, I expect there will not be much trouble. The difficulty with Jawaharlal, all said and done, is not insurmountable, so it seems at any rate. He frets and fumes, he storms, he is often in a rage, but after all he is a sport and so quickly regains his balance, makes rapid amends and sees that there is no unpleasantness left behind.

This letter is getting long, and still the business part remains. You will remember that in February last you were good enough to arrange for free passage on one of your boats for two ladies who are working here for us in India. They are now in touch with your agents in London, and trying to find out if a free passage back to India in one of your cargo boats is possible. Added to the two there is now a third lady, the wife-to-be of a German friend who is working here with us. It seems she was expelled from Germany, evidently for her pacifism, and her presence on a Hansa Line boat may not be exactly tolerable or pleasant. Have you any ships on which these three ladies might have a free passage, either from any of the English ports or the Italian ones?

You are silent about your health. Did you have an

operation after all, or are you just spending the recess in Zurich? Bapu is very anxious to know. I have also written to Rameshwardasji in this connection, in case you may have written to him in detail. I hope you got my cable about Bapu. There was no rise in the blood pressure worth speaking of, but he had been feeling the strain of overwork. He distinctly saw that danger was ahead if he did not take precautions betimes. He did so at once, curtailed part of his routine work and began to take more rest. He automatically goes into silence after every evening prayer. That ensures perfect rest until 4 o'clock next morning. I assure you that there is nothing to be anxious about.

Yours affectionately,
MAHADEV

On August 26 Mahadev wrote again on the same subject:—

The trouble, as I have before indicated, is with our own people. You know the Kakori Dacoity prisoners who were convicted some years ago of the most violent and unpardonable crimes. Pantji has released them all. It is a feather both in his cap and that of Haig*, who might well have objected to their release. But the moment their release was announced, our idiotic Congress Committee makes an announcement of taking these people out in procession. Poor Pantji was absolutely at sea. He was persuaded to be firm. He made it clear that if they persisted it would not be possible for him to do any such thing in future. Jawaharlal did not give any encouragement to the Congress enthusiasts. And so everything ended well.

In Madras, Rajaji is handling the situation in his remarkably clever way. But even he is not quite free from anxiety. He has to burn the candle at both ends. And there are disturbing elements there too. A Moplah M.L.A., whose ambition was to be in the Cabinet, was not taken and he now bombards him with letters saying that a Moplah rebellion is imminent! A superstition is rampant in those parts that every twenty years there has to be a burst-up. It is ordained by God! The last burst-up was in 1921. The time is ripe or nearly ripe for a fresh one. Rajaji emphatically says, 'I will not buy these fellows

* Sir Harry Haig, Governor of the United Provinces.

into silence.' It is likely the threats are idle, but they continue to come.

Pantji had a most difficult time of it at Cawnpore, as you already know. The situation in other parts also is not quite happy. Kher has wisely chosen Gulzarilal as his secretary and he is a tower of strength to him. He is here, there and everywhere. He has already settled two strikes in a strikingly quick and satisfactory manner. But there is a limit to his capacity too.

Yours affectionately,
MAHADEV

In a conversation which I had with Lord Linlithgow at this period he revealed the fact that he personally did not believe in Federation. The *Government of India Act* consisted, roughly, of two parts : one conferred provincial autonomy at once and provided means for Ministries to rule; the other envisaged the Federation of the whole of India, as soon as the Princes, the main obstacle, could be made to agree. Unfortunately Lord Linlithgow's personal distaste for Federation, which was probably quite welcome to some of his Executive Council, prevented him from taking any early action to encourage the Princes to agree to Federation. Had he done so, he had powerful argument on his side, for world war was clearly looming on the horizon. But by this time Neville Chamberlain was British Prime Minister, and Lord Linlithgow and indeed most of the British businessmen in India were blindly following in Chamberlain's steps. Chamberlain promised that there would be no war, and so it followed that the weightiest argument for Federation was ignored.

Only at the last moment did the Viceroy wake up to his duty to urge Federation strongly upon the Princes. But even then he carried it out half-heartedly and appointed, to go round the princely states on this task, an envoy who had no more enthusiasm for it than he had himself. Sir Arthur Lothian would probably accept this as a fair description of himself. And when war came

the Viceroy, instead of pushing Federation through, hastily scrapped the whole plan. Had he not done so, the whole history of India would have been very different, and partition need never have come upon us.

Here is my note on my interviews with the Viceroy which I sent in a letter to Mahadev for Bapu:—

After that, we talked about Federation. There were serious objections advanced by the Leftists as well as the Rightists. There was a likelihood of another breakdown unless the situation was carefully and sympathetically handled. What was he going to do? He told me that he was not satisfied with Federation. He appreciated the objections of the critics. But even if he wished it, the law could not be changed. What he did not appreciate, however, in our criticisms was that no constructive alternative had been suggested to him so far. I told him that at the proper time Bapu would do so, but the Viceroy should exercise his mind from this very moment as to what solution he could suggest. There were two things that were objectionable even from my point of view. Representatives of the Princes would come without election. And secondly it had yet to be proved by the authors of the Act that this Act contains in itself the seeds of automatic growth, a claim made off and on by Englishmen. Without the Army and Foreign Affairs under the control of the popular ministers, how ever are we going to reach the goal of Dominion Status? It was for the Viceroy to convince the public in India by some means that what was said by the authors of the Act was not a mere platitude. He replied that what was claimed about the Act was not a mere platitude. He did not want to treat his Cabinet as irresponsible for Army and Foreign Affairs. True, legally they had no power over these matters. But by usage this power could be established. This of course was only his personal opinion. But he wanted me to leave the matter at that so that he might exercise his brain for the proper occasion. I pointed out to him the necessity of talking to Gandhiji before the Federation became a reality and also added that if he could cultivate acquaintance with Jawaharlalji, he would be benefited. He asked me when Jawaharlalji was coming to Calcutta and when I told him that he would perhaps come on the 8th, he remarked, 'Oh, as early as that.'

Perhaps you are aware that the Viceroy will reach Calcutta on the 13th or the 14th.

The early difficulties of Ministers are illustrated in the following letter :—

31st December, 1937.

My dear Mahadevbhai,

Laithwaite came to see me yesterday and I had a long talk with him for nearly two hours. The detenus, the convicted prisoners and the question of Federation were the chief topics. He would convey the conversation to the Viceroy after which, were it necessary, I would be asked to see the Viceroy. About the detenus and the convicted prisoners, I told him what Andrews and I had already said to the Governor. Now that I had your letter indicating Bapu's views, I read the same to Laithwaite and added that even before Bapu came to Bengal, releases must begin and continue. In the absence of this policy the public and the prisoners would begin to get restive, and if the prisoners again resorted to hunger-strikes, it would be very embarrassing to all concerned and would also have a very injurious effect on Bapu's health which was equally a matter of political importance. He agreed with me that Bapu's health was a matter of political importance and asked whether what I wanted was that trickles of release should begin immediately and continue so that the public would feel that the question was not being neglected. I confirmed. He pointed out to me that as far as the Andaman prisoners were concerned, they were being repatriated. He referred to Bapu's telegram to the Viceroy which he received at the time of the reported hunger-strike, and he said that Bapu was informed about repatriation which would be finished in four to six weeks' time when the question of release would be considered. But I said that I was also talking about the detenus who could be released immediately and he is going to speak to the Viceroy who, I think, will help. After I have talked to the Viceroy, I will see the Governor again.

As regards Federation, I said that it was very essential that immediately after Bapu recovered, the Viceroy should begin his talks with him. If Federation were imposed without agreement, it would have disastrous effects and I did not like delay-

ing the matter. On the other hand, I was hopeful about Bapu being able to produce a solution. This will be conveyed to the Viceroy.

Then we had a talk about the U.P. affair. I pointed out to him that when the Congress was doing its best to maintain peace and non-violence, it was not fair that the Governor should have interfered. Laithwaite's point of view was that the Governors have not been interfering anywhere but, in this particular case, Parmanand was preaching violence and it was having a very bad effect on the soldiers at Dehra Dun. Pant was pressed again and again but somehow or other, he neglected the issue. Would it be advisable to give such a long rope to the Ministers as would in the end cause the situation to deteriorate to such an extent that maintenance of law and order would become impossible without the help of the military? He did not like Kidwai's speech in which he said that if the public did not maintain a non-violent atmosphere, the Ministers would have to resign. If that was the attitude of the Ministers, then the Governor would always be doubtful about the capacity of the Ministers to maintain non-violence. Would it be fair to the Governor if the Ministers resigned after allowing the situation to deteriorate? Would it not be the duty of the Governor under such circumstances always to watch and see that the situation did not deteriorate unduly? I gave a better interpretation of Kidwai's speech. The Ministers derived their powers from the electorate, and if the whole population wanted to revolt, the Ministers would have no alternative but to tell the people, 'since we do not carry your confidence, we resign, not because of any grievance against the Governor but because of your unruly behaviour.' Kidwai's speech in my opinion was the correct description of his own position and a wrong interpretation should not have been put on it. He saw my point, and yet argued that if the Ministers (because of the fear of the electorate) neglected their duty towards the maintenance of law and order, then at some stage the Governor must come in. Although he did not agree that the Governor of the U.P. had passed the limit, Laithwaite entirely agreed that the Ministers should be allowed full freedom even to make mistakes. He was curious to find out how it was that of all the Congress provinces, it was only in the U.P. that there was

shilly-shallying with the violent elements. He was full of praise for all other Congress provinces.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

The picture of the future seemed reasonably good. But Lord Linlithgow's tragic failure to consult the Legislature before forcing India into the War immediately on its outbreak, was too strong a dose for the Ministers to swallow. They struggled in vain to find a solution, and resigned when the War was a few weeks old. Had the Viceroy had the wisdom to consult India, I doubt not that she would have supported Britain.

In December 1941 Bapu sent me a copy of an 'open letter' he had addressed to Herr Hitler. Needless to say, the Censor intervened and he was not allowed to publish it, nor—presumably—did it ever reach Herr Hitler:—

Wardha, *Dec. 24th, 1941.*

Dear Friend,

That I address you as a friend is no formality. I own no foes. My business in life for the past 33 years has been to enlist the friendship of the whole of humanity by befriending mankind, irrespective of race, colour or creed.

I hope you will have the time and desire to know how a good portion of humanity who have been living under the influence of that doctrine of universal friendship, view your actions. We have no doubt about your bravery or devotion to your Fatherland, nor do we believe that you are the monster described by your opponents. But your own writings and pronouncements and those of your friends and admirers leave no room for doubt that many of your acts are monstrous and unbecoming of human dignity especially in the estimation of men like me who believe in universal friendliness. Such are your humiliation of Czechoslovakia, the rape of Poland and the swallowing of Denmark. I am aware that your view of life regards such spoliations as virtuous acts. But we have been taught from childhood to regard

them as acts degrading to humanity. Hence we cannot possibly wish success to your arms.

But ours is a unique position. We resist British Imperialism no less than Nazism. If there is a difference, it is in degree. One-fifth of the human race has been brought under the British heel by means that will not bear scrutiny. Our resistance to it does not mean harm to the British people. We seek to convert them, not to defeat them on the battlefield. Ours is an unarmed revolt against British rule. But whether we convert them or not, we are determined to make their rule impossible by non-violent non-co-operation. It is a method in its nature undefeatable. It is based on the knowledge that no spoliator can compass his end without a certain degrees of co-operation, willing or compulsory, from the victim. Our rulers may have our land and bodies but not our souls. They can have the former only by complete destruction of every Indian—man, woman or child. That all may not rise to that degree of heroism and that a fair amount of frightfulness can bend the back of revolt is true ; but the argument would be beside the point. For, if a fair number of men and women can be found in India who would be prepared, without any ill will against the spoliators, to lay down their lives rather than bend the knee to them, they will have shown the way to freedom from the tyranny of violence. I ask you to believe me when I say that you will find an unexpected number of such men and women in India. They have been having that training for the past 20 years.

We have been trying for the past half-century to throw off British rule. The movement for independence has never been so strong as now. The most powerful political organisation, I mean the Indian National Congress, is trying to achieve this end. We have attained a very fair measure of success through non-violent efforts. We were groping for the right means to combat the most organised violence in the world which the British power represents. You have challenged it. It remains to be seen which is the better organised, the German or the British. We know what the British heel means for us and the non-European races of the world. But we would never wish to end British rule with German aid. We have found in non-violence a force which, if organised, can, without doubt, match itself against a combination of all the most violent forces

in the world. In non-violent technique, as I have said, there is no such thing as defeat. It is all 'Do or die' without killing or hurting. It can be used practically without money and obviously without the aid of the science of destruction which you have brought to such perfection. It is a marvel to me that you do not see that it is nobody's monopoly. If not the British, some other power will certainly improve upon your method and beat you with your own weapon. You are leaving no legacy to your people of which they would feel proud. They cannot take pride in a recital of cruel deeds, however skilfully planned. I, therefore, appeal to you in the name of humanity to stop the war. You will lose nothing by referring all the matters of dispute between you and Great Britain to an international tribunal of your joint choice. If you attain success in the war, it will not prove that you were in the right. It will only prove that your power of destruction was greater. Whereas, an award by an impartial tribunal will show as far as it is humanly possible which party was in the right.

You know that not long ago I made an appeal to every Briton to accept my method of non-violent resistance. I did it because the British know me as a friend though a rebel. I am a stranger to you and your people. I have not the courage to make to you the appeal I made to every Briton. But my present proposal is much simpler because much more practical and familiar.

During this season when the hearts of the peoples of Europe yearn for peace, we have suspended even our own peaceful struggle. Is it too much to ask you to make an effort for peace during a time which may mean nothing to you personally but which must mean much to the millions of Europeans whose dumb cry for peace I hear, for my ears are attuned to hearing the dumb millions. I had intended to address a joint appeal to you and Signor Mussolini, whom I had the privilege of meeting when I was in Rome during my visit to England as a delegate to the Round Table Conference. I hope that he will take this as addressed to him also with the necessary changes.

I am, your sincere friend,

M. K. GANDHI

Before I conclude this chapter on the Ministers' difficulties I may record that I had the temerity to

write to Mr. Churchill early in 1937 and say that I was disappointed with his utterances in the Press about the political situation in India, reminding him that I had told him that the personal touch between the representatives of the Congress and the former Government had been lacking and the spirit of mutual distrust prevailed. I told him that during the Elections in some provinces the highest officials openly sided against the Congress, and that it was in this atmosphere that the Congress was now approaching the new Constitution. I went on to say:—

Let me assure you that Mr. Gandhi and others of his way of thinking honestly wish to work the Constitution for the good of the people. I conveyed your words to Mr. Gandhi, 'I will be entirely satisfied if you can give more bread and butter to your people. Not more loyalty to Great Britain. I am always for more bread and butter.' The Election Manifesto of the Congress was prepared with a view to giving more 'bread and butter'. And the Congress, in asking for certain assurances, rightly or wrongly felt that there would be interference from the Governors in carrying out their programme. You may criticise this suspicion, or, as Lord Lothian says, it may be due to lack of experience of democracy, but all the same it is there. And I also feel that with statesmanship and the personal touch, this misunderstanding could be removed.

Don't you think that an eminent statesman like you could be of great help in solving the problem ?

I quoted from memory and it may also be that at the time I misunderstood Mr. Churchill, and that he did not say 'not more loyalty', but 'and more loyalty' or 'with more loyalty'. Anyhow, Mr. Churchill was not prepared to admit that he had said that he did not look for more loyalty to the British from India. Here is his reply which, though marked 'Private' at the time, he has been kind enough to give me permission to publish :—

IN THE SHADOW OF THE MAHATMA

Private.

11, Morpeth Mansions,
Westminster, S. W. 1.
30th April, 1937.

Dear Mr. Birla,

Many thanks for your letter. I shall always be interested to hear from you. But you have not quoted me correctly in the sentence you mention. I certainly did not say the words you use.

You should seriously consider the present state of the world. If Great Britain were persuaded or forced for any cause, Indian or European, to withdraw her protection from India, it would continuously become the prey of Fascist dictator nations, Italy, Germany or Japan and then indeed with the modern facilities there would be a severity of government even worse than any experienced in bygone ages. The duty of the Indian electorate and of Congress is to take up the great task which has been offered them, and show that they can make India a happier country; and at the same time do everything they can to win the confidence of Great Britain, and offer to her gratitude and loyalty for being the guardian of Parliamentary government and Indian peace.

Yours sincerely,
WINSTON CHURCHILL

CHAPTER XXIII

WARTIME EPISODES

THE blunder made by Lord Linlithgow in not even going through the motions of appearing to consult the Legislature, or Indian public opinion, before declaring India a belligerent seemed irretrievable. Not only did the Congress Ministers resign during the first autumn of the war, but whereas the gallant Indian Army, of which we are so justly proud today, quickly distinguished itself and accumulated V.C.s and other honours even more quickly than the British Army, the public found no joy in these things and were apathetic if not openly hostile. Many no doubt even developed a kind of sympathy with the Nazis. For Japan there was sympathy in almost every quarter without wishing her to win—a queer thing indeed !

However, the Viceroy remained for the present in touch with Gandhiji, and much correspondence continued to pass between them. A letter from Mahadev to me illustrates their peculiar relationship at this time:—

Sevagram, 25-6-42.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

Thanks to Swamiji* who is coming to you, I can write you a real letter. For it is impossible to send anything nowadays by post, as you can well imagine.

Fischer—the writer of *Men and Politics* which you are reading, was here for four or five days... On the day Fischer left he let me see his own diary—that is just a part of it containing the gist of the Viceroy's talk with him regarding Bapu. It was most interesting and not a little strange. 'Gandhi has been very good to me all these years,' he said to Fischer. 'And that is to say a good deal. If he had remained the saint that he was in

* Anand Swami.

South Africa he would have done a lot of good to humanity. But unfortunately politics absorbed him here and have made him vain and egoistical. But it is nonsense to say, as you say some civilians have told you, that he is a spent force and may be ignored. He has a tremendous influence, sways the masses as no one else does and only next to him comes Jawaharlal. The rest in the Congress are all paid for their work. It is a businessmen's organisation. They finance it and keep it going. Gandhi's present move is enigmatic. It may be dangerous. I am watching it most closely. He is planning to instigate the people in the U.P. and Bengal. He will ask the peasants not to move from their homesteads. I am not going to be precipitate, but if his activities affect the war effort, I shall have to put him under control.' This is as good a report of the thing as my memory can give me.

Bapu had long talks with Jawahar and the Moulana. Jawahar is full of China and America. When Bapu altered his original stand in his interview given to Fischer, Bapu no doubt had Jawahar in mind. That interview fully met J's wishes, who suggested that Bapu must write a letter to Chiang explaining his position and assuring him of the help of Free India, also that the withdrawal proposal was entirely with a view to helping China. I do not quite know why Chiang wired against publication of the letter in *Harijan*. But the letter was wired to China and America at the time and in a way it was good that it must have been in Roosevelt's hands when Churchill met him.

* * * *

Rajaji was here for a couple of days, but at the end of two days' long and very friendly talks Bapu said, 'I find that the differences between him and me are deeper than I had imagined.' He, Bapu, urged him on to see Jinnah—I think he really needed no urging—and he will see him. But that man having given that vile interview to the *Times of India* man is now committed to oppose Bapu tooth and nail, and I don't think C.R. will be able to cut much ice with him. However, he is seeing him and will return to Wardha after that visit to communicate the result. But I have a fear that he will not tell even Bapu all that passes between him and Jinnah, not that he would deliberately keep anything from him, but because he sees everything through the

spectacles of his own pet plan and anything that upsets his apple-cart he would hesitate to reveal. However, it is, I think, well that he is seeing Jinnah.

I think I have now given you all the news worth giving. Bapu is not at all well. He is dead tired, and at the end of the day feels quite washed out. We have to make a desperate attempt to lessen his labours, but it is the new programme of which the thinking out takes a lot out of him. This is greatly to be deplored, but we cannot help him very materially. All I can do is to limit him to a couple of columns of *Harijan* and fill the rest myself, which I can easily do as I can write expositions of his views without much difficulty. But the thinking and planning he has to do himself! Only God can do it for him.

Horace Alexander and Symonds have come here. They are goody-goody fellows like all Quakers. Horace saw Amery before he left London. A. said H. might meet Gandhi and others. But there will be no result, I am afraid, as he is holding a brief for Cripps. However, they are both good people. I am asking them to stay with you. I hope you will have no objection. You can educate Horace a little, I think, for he knew very little, and you can find out something from him. He knows no one there and I thought much the best plan would be for them to stay with you. That will interfere with your plans somewhat but I hope you will not mind.

Love,
Yours,
MAHADEV

In England the Quakers and other well-meaning people, such as the members of Carl Heath's Conciliation Committee, vainly attempted to find a way out and sent a deputation to India to look at the scene. Mahadev wrote for Bapu from Wardha, asking me to put them up, which I gladly did:—

27th June, 1942.

My dear Mahadevbhai,

Your letter was full of information and I am thankful to you for sending me this mental food.

Mr. Horace and Mr. Symonds have both arrived here and I have put them both in one room. I wish I could have given

them two rooms, but that was not possible. But they are quite happy. I will look after their comfort. Please don't have any worry over their stay in Delhi.

There are a number of things to talk about, but I shall wait until we meet. I shall be there perhaps by the beginning of August.

I understand you are not well. You yourself have admitted that in the *Harijan*. Why not then come to Delhi? If you come, I promise to alter my programme and will stay here to keep you company. Or, I can take you to Pilani where nothing will disturb you. Even for the sake of work, it is necessary that you should take a rest and not have these collapses. It must be hateful to you that Bapu could walk a mile in grueling heat, while you could not perform the feat. I think you definitely need a rest and you ought to take it. Devadas agrees with me.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

The War brought many difficulties and preoccupations for Gandhiji and indeed for all Indians. The increasing shrillness of Jinnah's demand for Pakistan was an additional difficulty and on top of this came the tragedy of the Bengal Famine. Mr. Nehru's sympathy was roused by China's stand against the Japanese and this brought him into contact with the Generalissimo, Chiang Kai-shek, and his equally prominent wife. They reciprocated by showing sympathy with Jawaharlalji's passion for India's freedom, and even came to India to plead for it with Lord Linlithgow, whose guests they were. Bapu met them at my house in Calcutta and was duly photographed with them. But a letter which Mahadev sent me discloses another picture:—

Sevagram, 16-7-42.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

I wanted to send you a letter through Mira Ben but I was too tired and had no time in the morning to send a satisfactory letter. The Working Committee was this time an eye-opener. With the exception of the Khan Saheb the Muslims

have no heart in the Congress programme, or rather Bapu's programme. My fear is that the real situation is even worse. Rameshwarbhai sends me *Life* every week. This week's issue is a frightful revelation of things as they are. Bapu met the Generalissimo at your house in Calcutta. This *Life* contains all the photographs of the occasion. The description under the photographs could have been given by none but Madame, or someone on the Generalissimo's staff, for there was no one there but they and myself who could give this description. And then what a mischievous description of Bapu? And how insulting and how ungrateful? I had thought gratefulness was one of the greatest virtues of the Chinese. But even that seems woefully lacking so far as this couple is concerned. If they were so keen on having nothing to do with capitalists why should they have accepted poor Laxminivas' hospitality? The whole thing leaves a most unpleasant taste in the mouth. The visit ought not to have taken place. But it is well that Bapu was face to face with that 'inscrutable' man, as he always calls him. In his latest message the Generalissimo tells Bapu to do nothing precipitate, as Halifax, who has gone to Britain, told Chiang's representative in New York that he would move those in authority in England to bring about an understanding with India. Bapu has written to him in reply that he would take no hasty step, but neither can the step be long delayed, because the delay would defeat the very purpose of the step. I am afraid there is nothing behind this message, and Halifax is either fooling Chiang, or Chiang and Halifax are both fooling us!

Re your letter about price control, Bapu says you must make a move—you, that is, the merchants. If Nalini does something concrete and associates you with it, it would be a very good thing. Do have long talks with Mira Ben. She is full of spirit. I wish she were equally full of knowledge. But no harm can come out of her talks with the Big Three—if she gets an interview. Have a talk with me on receipt of this letter.

Yours,
MAHADEV

I had some talks with the late Liaquat Ali Khan in a vain endeavour to patch up differences between Bapu and Jinnah and, of course, kept Bapu fully inform-

ed of these talks and made no commitments on his behalf. It all came to nothing, and as it is idle to cry over spilt milk, it is useless to dilate on it here.

The situation, which according to Fischer—as reported by Mahadev—Lord Linlithgow had foreseen, arose. Gandhiji launched a campaign of individual civil disobedience. He himself was interned in the Aga Khan's Palace, Poona, and one by one a succession of Congress dictators were arrested and followed him there.

The war went on its weary way. For us Indians hoping for freedom, there were only rare breaks in the news. Gandhiji's 21-day fast, during which the Government refused all petitions for his release, and which he nevertheless carried to a successful conclusion, profoundly stirred the country.

CHAPTER XXIV

INDIA IN THE WAR

CONCERNING the reasons given for Bapu's arrest on August 8, 1942, and about the outbreak of violence which followed, and led to sabotage of the war effort and the ignominious collapse of Lord Wavell's attempt to carry the war into Japanese-occupied Burma, there are certain facts which future historians should note carefully.

One fact is certain, that in time of war, Lord Linlithgow, without consulting his military advisers, and apparently entirely on his own responsibility, took a grave decision—which was bound to affect the course of the war. Lord Wavell, the Commander-in-Chief, was at that moment absent from India, and subsequently declared that he knew nothing about it. The arrests were made before dawn on Sunday, August 8. Riots broke out in Bombay during the day. That evening the General holding the Eastern Command at Ranchi met the Editor of the *Statesman* at dinner in Calcutta. He knew nothing either of the arrests or of the riots, nor did the General commanding the Presidency Division in Calcutta, who was also present and was vitally concerned. Arthur Moore, the Editor, has recorded publicly their astonishment on learning the news from him.

The second fact which is beyond question is that Gandhiji's arrest cannot be justified by any allegation that he or the Congress were meditating any resort to violence. Here are the recorded answers to questions put to him while he was interned:—

Question : How do you reconcile your faith in non-violence with the allegations made against you and the Congress that all these acts of sabotage and violence that took place after the

8th of August so happened because of some secret instructions issued by you or by the Congress ?

Answer : There is absolutely no truth in it. I never issued any secret or overt instructions in favour of sabotage or any other kind of violence. Had the Congress issued such instructions, I would have known it. No such instructions were issued either by me or by the Congress.

Question : Do you then disapprove of these acts of sabotage and violence ?

Answer : I definitely disapprove of them. I have made it clear to all those friends who have met me during the period of my fast. I do not want to judge anyone who believes in violence. But then I would ask them to declare unequivocally that they are committing these acts of violence on their own behalf and because of their belief in violence. It is but fair to the Congress that these perpetrators of violence and sabotage should make this absolutely clear. If they would listen to my advice, I would suggest that they should surrender themselves to the police. Only in this way would they help the cause of the country. But if one does not believe in the Congress creed and my method, one should make it clear to all concerned.

Question : It has been suggested that you started this movement under the notion that the Allies were going to be defeated and that you synchronized the movement with the time when the Allied Nations were in difficulties; and that you wanted to take undue advantage of their position.

Answer : There is absolutely no truth in it. You can read my writings in the *Harijan* and I have made it more than clear that this was not my intention.

Question : Yes, I have read your articles in the *Harijan* and what I gathered therefrom was that you are not only not pro-German or pro-Japan, but you are anti-Nazi and anti-Fascist. Am I right ?

Answer : Definitely. No one has used stronger words than myself about Nazism and Fascism. I have called the Nazis and Fascists the scum of the earth. I wrote a letter sometime in May 1942 to Mira Ben while she was in Orissa. I cannot give you a copy of that letter since I am in jail. I understand Mira Ben has sent a copy of that letter to the Government. You can ask the Government to supply you with a copy of it and satisfy

yourself. I have given in that letter complete instructions as to how to resist the Japanese if they invade India at all. No one after reading that letter could charge me with any sympathy with Nazism or Fascism or with Japan.

Question : Is it not the position that Congress had pledged itself to give military help for the Allied cause in case of India being free, and a National Government being established ?

Answer : You are absolutely correct in drawing the conclusion that you have drawn. The National Government will, no doubt, in case of India being made free, fight for the Allies' cause with all the military resources at its disposal and will co-operate with the Allied Nations in every possible manner.

Question : Yes, this is the policy of the Congress. But you being a pacifist, would you obstruct the Congress plan to give military help to the Allied Nations ?

Answer : Certainly not. I am a pacifist. But if the National Government is formed and takes power on the basis of giving military help to the Allied Nations, I obviously cannot obstruct and will not obstruct. I cannot directly participate in any act of violence. But Congress is not pacifist in the same manner as I am. And I naturally would not do anything to obstruct the execution of the Congress intention.

Bapu's decision, when he was interned in the Aga Khan's house at Poona, to undergo a 21-day fast unless the Viceroy and the Government exonerated him and the Congress from any responsibility for the rebellion and acts of sabotage that had followed from his arrest, thoroughly frightened his friends. He was now well advanced in age and the possibility that the Government might not release him and might let him carry out his intention, filled us with alarm. Mr. K. M. Munshi, the present Governor of Uttar Pradesh (formerly the United Provinces), and I immediately decided to summon as representative a conference as possible in the hope of moving the Government to release him. Accordingly, on the 11th February 1943, we sent joint wires to Mr. Rajagopalachariar and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, asking them to attend and sponsor a conference

at once. This they duly did and as there was no room for a conference of such size in my house in Delhi, we held it in a marquee in the compound of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce. Hindus, Moslems, Sikhs, Parsis and Englishmen were well represented. We all avoided constitutional and political issues and, in the resolutions passed, we concentrated on making our appeal on purely humanitarian grounds. But we did not succeed in melting the heart of the Government. Looking back, one cannot but be amazed at the risk the Government took. Had Gandhiji died, the whole country would have been ablaze. Instead of helping the war effort, they would themselves prove its saboteurs. It was indeed fortunate for them that Gandhiji survived and carried his fast to a successful conclusion. Admittedly their position was difficult. They could not be expected to profess to exonerate the Congress, when in fact they did believe it responsible. But an honest compromise was easily open to them. They could have announced that, without prejudice to any other issue, they would release Mr. Gandhi, on the purely humanitarian grounds on which we appealed to them. They knew well enough that whether or not Bapu over-estimated the extent to which he had converted his supposed followers, he himself detested violence and therefore they could, at most, attribute to him only some indirect responsibility. They had previously freely admitted that he had rendered great service in maintaining a peaceful atmosphere.

Bapu's faithful private secretary, Mahadev, died during his internment. Pyarelal who, with his sister, Dr. Sushila, had long been attached to Gandhiji, filled his place.

When Bapu was released and I was free to correspond again, I was soon in correspondence with Pyarelal, because I did not wish to intrude on Bapu's time,

although I was anxious on account of his health and keen on receiving some guidance from him.

'Dilkusha', Panchgani, 31-7-44.

Dear Ghanshyamdasji,

Bapu asked me to arrange to get regularly some foreign periodicals. I sent the following list to Shri Shantikumar :

1. *New Statesman and Nation*
2. *Time* (American)
3. *Reader's Digest*
4. *Manchester Guardian* (Weekly)
5. *The Times* (Weekly)
6. *Unity*
7. *Asia*

He has written to say that he tried but failed. Could you take it upon yourself to get them for me ?

Yours sincerely,
PYARELAL

7th August, 1944.

My dear Pyarelal,

I have received your letter of the 31st. There will be no difficulty in getting the papers that you have asked for. You will get them direct. I will cable today to my offices in London and New York to see to this. Please let me know when you begin to get them.

If there is anything worth writing to me please keep me well posted just as Mahadevbhai used to do. You can often 'think aloud' to me in your letters.

I am not going to Bombay just now. But please tell Bapu that whenever he needs me whether in Sevagram or at any other place, I will be at his disposal. I am not writing to him because he has enough to do. So I do not want to make his post unnecessarily heavy. As regards his health I hope the hookworms have now disappeared for good.

Yours sincerely,
G. D. BIRLA

After Bapu was released from the Aga Khan's Palace he was not feeling at all happy. His co-workers and colleagues were still in jail and he had been sepa-

rated, first from Mahadev and then from Ba, in the Palace. He felt that either his co-workers should be released or that he should return to jail. At this stage some unkind 'friends' who had never concealed their jealousy of Bapu's association with my family, raised objections to his putting up at Birla House in Bombay or in Delhi whenever he came to these cities. When he heard this Bapu flatly refused to abandon Birla House where he had been accustomed to stay on and off for many years. These so-called friends then tried to dissuade him from staying with us on the plea that, since he was likely to be arrested again, it would not be fair on his part to associate himself too closely with my family, and that as he had previously been arrested at Birla House this fact might jeopardise my family's own security.

When Bapu broached this subject to me at Poona I was simply amazed. I told him very frankly that whatever the risk might be, since I had been associated with him for over twenty-eight years, I could not for one moment think of shirking my responsibility by trying to avoid any risk that my association with him might involve ; but Bapu insisted on writing the following letter to my brother Rameshwardas, who was in Bombay. Rameshwardas's reply showed, of course, the same attitude as I did.

Sevagram, Wardha, C.P.,
12-8-44.

Brother Rameshwardas,

I have been thinking of writing to you for a considerable time. But I could not snatch time to do so. Now I must write. Mr. Jinnah's letter may be here any time. I have written asking for three or four days' respite. I am being pressed a great deal not to put up at Birla House. I have said plainly that I would not abandon Birla House without any reason. The occasion for writing this is that if, by any chance, my putting up there is not considered proper, I should be told so without any hesitation. This question arose at Poona also and it was decided that there

should be no question of any hesitation on your part. I do not remember if you were there at that time. The talk was held with Ghanshyamdas. But now that the time of my visit to Bombay is drawing near, I thought it my duty to ask you as a precautionary measure.

There is one other thing which is comparatively more important, though from the view-point of time it is not so important as the question of my stay in Bombay. Now that I am going to be arrested, I should feel content if I could finalise what I should have carried on long ago. It is my belief that the work of Talimi Sangha is going on well. Rs. 50,000/- should be provided for it.

I want to return the money received as donation for Mira Ben. It is now a duty to return that money. This weight should be borne by the Satyagraha Ashram Fund. Though the amount involved is small, still Narayan Das held it up for constructive work. I can take away that amount, but we can do so only by injuring that work and I do not want to do that if possible. This may amount to nearly Rs. 50,000/-. I have not been able to find out the actual amount to be paid. The moneys received for the last so many years continue to be entered among the donations and it takes time to locate the exact amount. All the account books of the Ashram are lying at different places. Ordinarily it is as difficult to take out such items from well-preserved accounts as it is to trace a needle which has fallen in a heap of grass. Still I have given directions that the account be prepared.

There are also miscellaneous expenses and it is imperative to do something about this matter. This will also swallow something like Rs. 50,000/-. I have not prepared an accurate account.

Can you give all these amounts with ease? You can even reply in the negative without any hesitation. All my undertakings depend upon God. If God does not want to hinder any particular undertaking, he sends his draft through somebody. Therefore, if I don't get the amount, I will get angry neither with God nor with you. I have never struck the branch of the tree under which I have taken shelter, and God willing, I am not going to do that in my lifetime.

I hope you are all doing well. I am sending this through Jagdish. He was here with brother Munshi's letter. Nowadays

it is getting difficult to decide what should be sent by post and what should not.

With Bapu's Blessings.

His next letter came shortly before Bapu's infructuous meeting with Jinnah, who proved quite intractable.

The violent opposition displayed against Bapu's project of meeting Jinnah, and the personal hostility to Bapu himself, gave grim foreboding of the death he was eventually to die at the hands of fanatical Hindus:—

Bombay, *9th September, 1944.*

Dear Ghanshyamdasji,

You must have seen in the papers reports of the doings of the picketers at Sevagram. For some time it was pure fun so far as we were concerned, though on the first day the leader had blurted out that this was only the first step and, if necessary, force would be employed to prevent Bapu from going to meet Q.A.*. Yesterday they gave intimation that they would physically prevent Gandhiji from going out of the hut and planted pickets at all the three exits leading out of the hut.

This morning I had intimation on the telephone from the D.S.P. that they intended serious mischief and, therefore, the Police will be compelled to take action. Bapu had proposed to be all alone in their midst and go on foot to Wardha, unless they themselves changed their mind and asked him to get into the car. The time for departure was fixed at noon to allow for the delay. Just before departure the D.S.P. came and said that he had arrested the picketers after giving them due notice and after all persuasion had failed. Perhaps you know that all demonstrations, processions etc. are banned in Wardha District at present.

The leader of the picketers appeared to be very highly strung, fanatical and of a neurotic type which caused some anxiety. Searching of his person after arrest revealed a full-sized dagger.

When the Police Officer who arrested him banteringly remarked that at any rate he had the satisfaction of becoming a martyr, quick came the reply, 'No, that will be when someone assassinates Gandhiji.' 'Why not leave it to leaders to settle it among themselves; for instance, Savarkar might come and do

* Mr. Jinnah, the Qaid-i-Azam.

the job,' jocularly remarked the Police Officer in question. The reply was, 'That will be too great an honour for Gandhiji. A jamadar will be quite enough for the purpose.'

Bapu has been having serious discussions with the Ashram people. He has advised the dissolution of the Ashram unless it is so organised as to be able to acquit itself with credit in the hour of test. The case of the present failure in Bapu's opinion is the disturbing element of his presence. Therefore, in case of re-organisation being decided upon he would remove himself from the Ashram and shift either to Birla House (Sevagram) or to Wardha. You must have seen also the drastic re-orientation he has recommended to A.I.S.A. I would like you to go carefully through the gist of his remarks which I have sent to the Press. Since then, however, some new developments have taken place and it is difficult to predict the shape of things to come.

Yours sincerely,
PYARELAL

This so disturbed me that I sent an express telegram in reply:—

ADVISE PASSING ON TRUE FACTS ABOUT SEVAGRAM PICKETERS TO PRESS. ESSENTIAL PUBLIC SHOULD KNOW.

GHANSHYAMDAS (13-9-44)

But Bapu would not permit this:—

Birla House, Mount Pleasant Road,
Bombay, September 16th, 1944.

Dear Ghanshyamdasji,

I had your wire. Bapu says that the most relevant facts in the episode—facts that matter—cannot be published at this stage as the case is, technically speaking, *sub judice*.

I use the word 'technically' advisedly as according to the D.S.P., who saw me at Wardha, the idea seems to be to keep the picketers in detention till Bapu's return to Sevagram, so that there may be no further nuisance to be tackled on his return.

The talks are running their even course. From twice a day they had to be reduced to once a day only, and that too during the evening, as the mornings had to be set apart for Dr. Dinshaw, who is attending on the Qaid-i-Azam.

I had both your wires. I have already explained the matter to Rameshwarji, who will speak to you on the phone.

Yours sincerely,

PYARELAL

PS.—Since the above was written Bapu has seen both your wires. His reply is being telegraphed to you. It is as follows: 'My definite wish you should go Mussoorie. You will shorten stay there if I want you.'

Pyarelal wrote in a prophetic strain on the 6th December, 1944:—

Bapu expects to be able to resume normal work at the end of the month. Let us hope so. But I am of the opinion that there should be a radical change in the scope and nature of his activity hereafter. His work should no longer be that of an engine driver but of a pointsman only. He should give forth ideas and radiate moral and spiritual influence. It is my firm faith that his guidance will be needed on some future occasion more than we can imagine today. The best is yet to be. He owes it to himself and the world to conserve himself in the best way possible.

Rajaji is leaving today. I wish there was someone like him to take his place by Bapu's side. In spite of all the detachment that Bapu has cultivated he is very human, and the presence near him of someone from among his Old Guard cannot be over-estimated.

There is something frightening in his utter spiritual isolation. In a measure it is inseparable from greatness. But surely something could be done to mitigate it.

CHAPTER XXV

FRIENDS OF INDIA

IT is worth while, in what aims at being a small contribution to India's modern history, to single out the names of some foreigners who strove for, and contributed to, her independence. There were many sympathisers in America and elsewhere, but their efforts were not very effective and inevitably Britain could do more. World opinion, if it can swell into volumes, can no doubt be influential, but attempts at intervention only stiffened British resistance. An example of the latter is Ambassador Philips' well-meant American intervention on our behalf which, despite the close partnership of President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill, seems only to have hardened the latter's opposition.

Our British friends divide into two categories, those in Britain and those in India. Friends in Britain again subdivide. Some were chiefly animated by an honourable sense of duty, and a realisation that they must move with the times. Whatever the die-hard views of individuals might be, there was no doubt that ever since Macaulay's day the declared policy of the British Parliament and the accepted national programme of the British people as a whole—who, as Lord Halifax once said, can really conceive of no other—was that Indians should progressively learn to govern themselves and to do so as soon as they could. Such were the motives that animated Sir Samuel Hoare and most of his Conservative colleagues, who carried through the *Government of India Act* with the help of Mr. Attlee and the Opposition, and against the wishes of many of their own party.

But there were also men in governing circles who were moved not only by their sense of honour and duty but by religious beliefs and a love of mankind which in-

stilled in them a deep sympathy with India and made them look forward with joy to our future independence. Of these the chief were Lord Halifax, a Conservative Viceroy and Cabinet Minister, and Lord Lothian, from the Liberal benches, a former Under-Secretary of State for India and a Minister in Coalition Governments. Real friendship sprang up between Bapu and these two men. But keen though he was in general on personal contact, he did not 'enthuse' when I reported my conversation with Mr. Churchill in which, at my instigation, the latter had discussed the possibility of his visiting India. Bapu made it clear to me that, as far as he was concerned, no invitation or encouragement would be forthcoming. Lord Lothian, he said, was a very different matter, and he looked forward eagerly to his visit. The visit was a great success and gave us much pleasure. Not only was he my guest in Delhi and elsewhere ; he went to Wardha and as Bapu's guest shared the austerities of the Sevagram Ashram.

There were other friends, notably the Quakers, whose religious feelings made them sympathise with Bapu's non-violent creed. In India they had their counterpart in missionaries, most of whom, whether British or American, sympathised openly with the National Movement. An exception may perhaps be made in the case of the Catholic Jesuits, mostly from Latin countries, who refrained from any political expression, whatever their private views may have been.

British Labour M.P.s in general and the Trade Unions declared their sympathies, and to Mr. Attlee, formerly a member of the much-attacked Simon Commission, fell the honour of carrying through Britain's pledges when the War was over. Of the rank and file, the Rev. Mr. Sorensen and Mr. Fenner Brockway were prominent and made up in assiduity what they sometimes lacked in information.

Opposition naturally came from those who had a vested interest in British ascendancy. These were in England the large trading houses that had made fortunes through the colonial trade. India was a vast market for manufactures of all kinds, from needles to anchors, and sometimes the raw materials for these came chiefly from India itself. Thus cotton from India went in British ships to Lancashire and came back in the form of piece-goods to a limitless market in India. There were also numerous families in the upper and middle classes, the heads of which had served in India in the Army, or the Civil Service, or in some other capacity, where they had enjoyed a pleasant life, saved some money and retired on good pensions to Cheltenham, Camberley and Bedford. These regarded India as more or less a preserve for their sons.

In India they had their counterparts. The Indian Civil Service, although it loyally carried out orders from England, and honestly sought to promote the growth of parliamentary institutions in India, contained many members who made no secret of their private lack of faith or their downright disapproval. They regarded themselves as a necessary 'steel frame', and they disbelieved in our ability to govern ourselves because they found it pleasant to govern us. An honourable exception may be made for the Indian Army and Navy, which eschewed politics ; and in these services there was real comradeship between officers and men, since in the war the lives of both were equally at stake and they depended on each other.

In business circles, vested interests followed the same pattern. Banking, shipping and insurance were regarded as British perquisites. Canny Scots, who monopolised the jute trade at both ends, from Bengal fields and Hooghly mills to Dundee, prospered enormously and looked forward to their children following in their footsteps. Great managing agency firms grew

up in the big cities, and had ramifications all over India. By and large all these people were powerful opponents and appeared determined 'die-hards', though in the end they collapsed as gracefully as they could when the British Government sent Lord Mountbatten to be the last Viceroy and made clear their future intentions. Their capacity for adapting themselves to a new situation was quickly demonstrated.

Yet even in these interested circles there have always been notable exceptions. In England, for example, I found in Lord Derby, from whom on territorial grounds Lancashire may have expected more biased partisanship, a fair-minded man, devoid of prejudice, and totally without conceit. In India we do not forget that the Congress was founded by Britons, chief of whom was a Scottish businessman in Calcutta, the first Andrew Yule. Sir Henry Cotton, of the Indian Civil Service, was another notable friend in those days. In journalism in the nineteenth century Robert Knight who founded first the *Times of India* and then the *Statesman*, was a stout champion.

No doubt there were many other sympathisers, known or unknown. When Bapu pulled us up, increased our self-respect, and prepared us to stand on our own legs, their numbers greatly increased. The mildness of what Mr. Lloyd George called 'the mild Hindu' had become a byword. When they discovered that this mildness had a limit, the British respected us more.

CHAPTER XXVI

DEADLOCK

DEADLOCK arose when the Congress Ministers resigned in the first autumn of the war. This, however, produced no immediate break in the relations between the Viceroy and the national leader. They corresponded amicably and met at intervals in a sincere attempt to arrive at some agreement. Yet there were deeply engrained suspicions on both sides. Suspicion breeds suspicion, and which side began it is not a point to be easily decided. It did not originate in the British Parliament or Britons outside India, but it had a long history amongst Britons in India. They were always on the alert to defend their privileged position, and though ostensibly as businessmen they made a parade of leaving politics alone—even when they became members of the Legislatures they avoided taking sides on large controversial interests—our numbers were to them something of a nightmare. They saw themselves as a handful of men who, by some hypnotic miracle, lived luxuriously amidst hundreds of millions of people less fortunately placed. Yet such was the rapid growth of population amongst the poor that it was clear that these hundreds of millions would eventually swell into thousands of millions. It was true that the problem of raising the standard of life amongst these thousands of millions was not one that the British had created (except in so far as they had produced a peaceful order) nor was it one that could be solved merely by their departure. But it was an uneasy situation, and from 1857 onwards the unofficial British population which seemed generally so carefree and, in Indian eyes—then unaccustomed to the emergence of women into social life—excessively frivolous, was subject to sudden panics. The merest

rumour that there was some Indian plot for 'mutiny' on New Year's Day or some other date, sent cold shivers down their spines. And they had imaginary fears of all being murdered in their beds. How long, they asked themselves, would the hypnotic miracle last ?

On the other hand, we Indians—not excluding Bapu himself—had become over-suspicious. The great majority knew the English only through those whom they met or had to deal with in India. These, though fair and average specimens of their countrymen, and in some cases very fine specimens above the average, were over-privileged and consequently really on the defensive. Unfortunately, suspicion and intrigue were not uncommon in our country before the British came, when it consisted of principalities governed by autocratic rulers. It was therefore only natural to the majority to impute motives to and harbour suspicions of our new British masters. The masses regarded them as autocratic and had never heard of democratic institutions.

Bapu himself was originally a startling exception. From childhood, and when he was a young man, he was evidently singularly free from all suspicions. He was indeed born innately truthful ; even those boyish deceptions, which he has so conscientiously recorded in his autobiography, were paradoxically due to simplicity and the belief that comrades who urged him to smoke, drink and break rules, spoke the truth when they said there was no harm in it. From these influences he was saved by his naturally loving disposition. He was devoted to his mother and he realised that if he persisted in keeping bad company he would break her heart.

So it was still an unusually frank, innocent and unsuspicious young man who went to study law in England, returned to practice it in India and went to South Africa, also as a lawyer. He was indeed at this period an anglophil. He had learnt to like the English in their own country and believed that their association

with India would eventually lead to spreading similar democratic institutions in India. Hence his sympathies were never in doubt when he was in South Africa during the Boer War. And we can believe that even in those distant days his inner vision told him that his principal opponents in South Africa would prove to be not the British but the colonial Dutch, the so-called Afrikanders, just as the strongest opposition he had to encounter in Britain came from the colonial British. But hope deferred makes the heart sick. At every stage the colonial British (always with some honourable exceptions) opposed advance towards self-government in India and succeeded so well in slowing up the pace of reform that even Bapu became, in the end, deeply suspicious. He continued his support for Britain in World War I, but a turning point followed and thereafter the habit of suspicion pursued him. Yet the occasion of this transformation, the Rowlatt Act, seems to suggest that during his long championship of Indian nationalism he had forgotten the characteristic peculiarities of the British, with which he had once been intimate. For the Rowlatt Act was merely the taking of emergency reserve powers 'in case'. It was never even once enforced and today the independent Government of India finds it necessary to retain all these powers; and it has even had to use them against Communists.

In his conversation with the Viceroy at this time, Bapu strongly objected to the term 'Dominion Status'. His views reveal themselves in what follows. On the 12th January, 1940, I wrote to Mahadev :—

I do not know why we seek to create an unnecessary distinction between Dominion Status and Independence. Even if we want to sever our connection, we can do so after we achieve Dominion Status of the Westminster Statute type. Why should we ask Great Britain to cut us off from them? If we so desire, we can ourselves take the responsibility after we are given the freedom to do so. Then if we sever the connection, we will

do so with the full consent of the electorate. By asking Great Britain to cut us off from the Commonwealth, we are asking them to do something which our own electorate should have the right to do. In fact, Great Britain can very well say : 'Why should we take the responsibility ? If you so desire, you may sever the connection after you have achieved Dominion Status.' And I think it would be quite logical on their part to say so.

And on the 14th Bapu wrote to the Viceroy:—

I have read and re-read your Bombay speech. I write this, however, to put before you my difficulties. Dominion Status in terms of the Statute of Westminster and Independence are taken to be equivalent terms. If so, should you not use the term that fits India's case ?

On the 15th Mahadev wrote to me:—

I quite see all that you say including the inherent impossibility of England declaring India's Independence. But Bapu does not. However, if everything goes well, and the whole thing hangs on this, Bapu would reconsider—though he firmly believes that the Viceroy understands his view-point better than anyone else. In fact he says if he (Bapu) were in England he could easily get England to use the word Independence instead of Dominion Status.

Sometimes Mahadev found Bapu's changes of mood sorely trying. Occasionally his patience gave out, as in his reference to Sevagram as a lunatic asylum :—

Segaon, via Wardha, C.P., 27-1-40.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

Bapu is queer. He believes that the work at Delhi would not detain him for more than one or two days—which is pessimism. But, then he also says that the stay might be prolonged if others were also called—which is optimism. Then again he says that assuming that he would stay till the 10th, a meeting of the Harijan Sevak Sangh might be called for the 10th, or it might be fixed for the 6th, supposing that he would stay for only a couple of days. It would have been better if the 7th or 8th were announced. Bapu is taking advantage of the fact that the date was not announced. His heart is in the hospital here.

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Gujarati *Harijan Bandhu* has Bapu's article 'To the Gujaratis'. Do read it. Segaon is to be renamed Sevagram. A petition has been filed for inserting this name in Government records as well. The name will, of course, be changed, but it would have been better if it were named 'Lunatic Asylum'.

Yours sincerely,

MAHADEV

Bapu sent me a telegram on the same day, reflecting his oscillations, and I confess it left me wondering too whether I was there or here, or 'all there':—

EITHER HARIJANSEVAK SANGH MEETING HERE AS ANNOUNCED OR THERE FROM SIXTH. DON'T EXPECT ME BE THERE AFTER MY SPECIAL WORK FINISHED OR CHOOSE DATE AFTER MALIKANDA AT WARDHA. BAPU.

Many were the thorns in the path of peacemakers in those days. Another letter from Mahadev suggests that Bapu might have gone further in that direction, but for his regard for some of his friends:—

You will be interested to hear that just when you spoke to me on the phone about your talk with Zafrulla, I had finished an article on Jinnah and placed it before Bapu. I did not tell you about it because I had no confidence that Bapu would pass it. It has however been passed and gone in [to *Harijan*] this week! There is another article which you will also like, but to my mind the best part of it was cut out by Bapu, lest it should irritate Jawahar. The article is a page from Irish history, and having summarised the facts on the constitutional question I had quoted Griffith to this effect: 'We took an oath to the Irish Republic, but as President de Valera himself said *he understood that oath to bind him to do the best he could for Ireland*, so do we. We have done the best we could for Ireland. If the Irish people say: 'We have got everything else but the name Republic and we will fight for it; I would say to them that they are fools.' And I quoted the words with this comment: 'These words contain a little warning for some of our over-ardent spirits too.' This Bapu scored out. I asked Bapu if he did not agree with Griffith. He said he did, but it was not proper to say it!

Nothing came of Bapu's talks with the Viceroy at this time. Sir Jagdish Prasad told me that Lord Linlithgow found him unresponsive.

8th February, 1940.

My dear Mahadevbhai,

After Bapu left, I heard from a reliable source that Bapu did not leave a friendly impression on the mind of the Viceroy. It was felt that Bapu was very stiff, uncompromising and unresponsive. It was expected that Bapu would take the concrete things one by one and would try to contribute towards a settlement. The Viceroy tried to open discussion on the Army and the Princes. He wanted Bapu to meet these people and solve the problems with the Viceroy's help. He had expected reciprocation and felt disappointed that Bapu 'did not try to put any plank on the gulf that seemed to exist.'

The natural conclusion drawn was that Bapu was influenced by Leftists and that he was out for a 'fight'. The Viceroy had also expected that Bapu would stay on for more interviews when requested to do so, and that he would not be in a hurry to terminate the conversation. And because he was in such an unseemly hurry, they thought that he had gone back with rancour and that a Civil Disobedience Movement would be the only outcome of such a position.

Bapu was not quite correct in thinking that the Viceroy appreciated his position and that there was no misunderstanding. The Viceroy did feel disappointed at Bapu's attitude. Devadas and myself both share the feeling of the Viceroy because we also feel that Bapu was unresponsive and unhelpful.

However, when I heard this from Sir Jagdish, I told him to disabuse the mind of the Viceroy, and also Laithwaite, that Bapu had gone back with any rancour or disappointment or that there was Civil Disobedience in the air. Sir Jagdish informed Laithwaite about this, who asked me to see him. I met Laithwaite this morning and the matter is cleared up.

I told Laithwaite generally about the talk that I had with Bapu, and explained to him that Bapu felt that it was not a political pact that he was after. He was after a moral conversion. A mere political pact may degenerate into another Rajkot Award.

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After my talk, Laithwaite regained his cheerfulness and said that with the background that I gave him, he understood the whole position and no longer entertained pessimism. He asked me if I had any constructive suggestion to make. I frankly confessed that I had none. Perhaps you would be able to tell me if something could be suggested. General ideas are all right, but you have to give them a practical shape. And in my opinion the time has come, or it will come after the Ramgarh Congress, when we should try to give the ideas a concrete shape. If we really desire a settlement in the near future, then we have to look upon the question from both points of view. Even moral conversion is possible only if you appreciate the opponent's difficulty and try to help him.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

But an article from Bapu's pen stilled my doubts, and next day I took back what I had said :—

My dear Mahadevbhai,

I got the article from *Harijan Sevak* before it has arrived from you direct, and I marvel at Bapu's way of handling a most delicate situation. It is really a wonderful article. I was wrong in criticising Bapu in my yesterday's letter, saying that he refused to appreciate his opponent's difficulty. It appears from this article that he has already done so. I fear we are apt to forget at times the high moral plane on which Bapu functions. In our zeal for freedom, and being conscious of our weakness, we look more to the end than to the means, whereas for Bapu, means and the end are both one and the same. I will try to rub it into my mind that if we look after the means, the end is automatically achieved. Looking at it even as a practical man, I have no doubt that the formula of Dominion Status without a real change of heart on the part of Great Britain is liable to become a thing like Gwyer's Award. I think the heart is already set towards a change. Maybe India and England may enter into a competition, vying with each other in manufacturing cordiality and friendship. So it is better to have patience and wait.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

I unburdened myself in a letter from Calcutta on March 8:—

My dear Mahadevbhai,

I have read the advance copy of Bapu's article which you sent to Bajrang. Bapu has thought too loudly in this article and hence one can see the movements of his mind in a magnified form. I like it partly because it rules out Civil Disobedience altogether. You know I hate Civil Disobedience. In the name of non-violence it has encouraged violence. In the name of construction, it has destroyed many things. Yet it brought about a wonderful awakening in the country. But if this psychology continues, any Government, even our own, would become an impossibility. We have a large number of budding 'Satyagrahis'. They will all come out against our own Government and through terrorism and corruption make all good government impossible. I admit the sting of the Disobedience Movement is taken out immediately it is made non-violent. But is that really so? Bapu insists on non-violence in thought, word and deed. But I regret that not even the closest co-workers of Bapu have assimilated this spirit. And action is only a reflection of thought. Hence my horror at any talk of Civil Disobedience. It is partly because of this that I liked this article. But again I like the last para of Bapu's article. I agree that Bapu is a misfit in the Congress. He is being exploited because people know that he alone can lead the country to a successful mass Civil Disobedience Movement. But while people want him to help, they never fulfil his programme. There does not seem to be any will to do so. The truth perhaps is that nobody believes in non-violence. Everybody in political circles wants an upheaval and not a non-violent fight. I can say for myself that I have got intellectual faith in it. But I don't think that helps much. Bapu could be a better mediator. By identifying himself too much with the Congress, he has effaced the distinction between himself and the Leftists. Non-violence and violence have become, in a way, synonyms. I think this is a most anomalous position and I feel disgusted at this position at times.

If you so desire, you may show my letter to Bapu. Bapu's non-violence has a better chance of success if he is alone. It is a

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mockery that the Congress should try to represent this creed when it is not qualified for this.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

Here is the reply:—

Segaon, via Wardha. (C.P.),
11-3-40.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

Your long letter. I understand and appreciate all that you say. I placed it before Bapu who read it but I cannot fathom his reaction to it, as he is silent. Assuming that all that you say about C.D. is true—and you are perilously near Arthur Moore in what you say—do you suggest that violence would be better than civil disobedience, however, inadequate? I do not think so. Human nature with all its weaknesses must have some medium for giving vent to its protest, and if you deprive oppressed humanity of even civil disobedience, you deprive it of all it has and drive it to abject cowardice. I am putting it very strongly but I am expressing my clear conviction. I am sure that we will progress from honest error to truth and then from truth to truth. I have written a long article for *H.T.** Congress Number yesterday. I do not know that Devadas or you will like it, but if Devadas publishes it I want you to see it.

If Bapu says anything about your letter I shall let you know. Will you kindly tell Bajranglalji that I am very thankful for his very full letter about Andrews? I showed it to Bapu and shall let you have Bapu's views on the matter tomorrow.

Yours affectionately,
MAHADEV

* *Hindustan Times*.

Calcutta, 15th March, 1940.

My dear Mahadevbhai,

Why did you interpret my letter as arguing that even violence could be better than civil disobedience, however inadequate? I agree with you that human nature must have some medium for giving vent to its protest and for that purpose civil disobedience, even if it be a bit uncivil, is better than violence. Satyagraha in its true form is, of course, the display of our desire to protest

without fully exploring the avenues of an honourable settlement. At times I feel that we are over-emphasising the fighting part of our programme and ignoring settlement through persuasion. We have pitched our demands so high that we have made it impossible for Englishmen to come to an honourable settlement. That is where I complain. There are others even in the Working Committee who feel like myself. But in the presence of Bapu I, and perhaps many others, feel a sort of optimistic confidence which I, at any rate, lose immediately I begin to coolly analyse the position when no longer in his presence. This I think is succumbing to the heart and ignoring the head, although God alone knows which is more stupid! However, doubts about the wisdom of our present policy haunt me. We are passing through a critical period and so I said to myself that I must again put my doubts before Bapu. So I jotted down my thoughts and have sent you a copy for whatever it is worth. When I consult my heart, I feel that Bapu must win eventually because even though he may commit mistakes, he will commit less mistakes than other human beings. God must guide him. But this is talking with faith. When I consult my head and do a bit of 'rational' thinking, I come to no other conclusion than this, that we have not played our cards well.

But you need not waste your time over me. And if you do so, you should do so only to educate me. In any case, whatever I write, good or bad, please show it to Bapu. Bapu said to me many times that I should continue to influence him because seemingly I might not succeed but unconsciously he might get influenced. And so I am flooding you with all these thoughts. They also give me a little peace of mind.

Yours affectionately,
GHANSHYAMDAS

Bapu himself wrote two days later:—

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

I have gone through your letter and your note. I share your grief. I am quite convinced that it is just at this moment that we cannot be satisfied with so much as an iota less. I fail to detect any defect in my scheme. On the contrary it is of advantage to them. The fact that they do not agree only shows that they do not wish for India's freedom. The Princes' attitude has

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been simply intolerable. Who told you I do not wish to meet them? Let them so much as give me a sign and I shall meet them. The fact is that they themselves do not want to meet me.

Bapu's blessings,

P.S.—If you so desire I am ready to come down to Calcutta for Sevasadan.

Segaon, via Wardha, C.P.,
17-3-40.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

I got all your letters read by Bapu. I have never held that you write long letters to me just for the sake of exchange of ideas. I have always believed that by writing to me you can convey certain things to Bapu indirectly. That is why I place all your letters before him.

It has never been my impression that you like violence better than imperfect non-co-operation. What I said was that your position was perilously near Moore's and as for him, he always preferred violence. As a matter of fact suffering humanity needs an ideal outlet. Bapu liked this one, and he has been trying to perfect it by easy stages.

Either he will perish in the attempt or this outlet will be perfected.

Bapu has decided to take a very important step in his life. You will probably learn of it before this reaches you. If you are not calling Bapu to Calcutta, then I can come down for a day to give you details.

Yours sincerely,
MAHADEV

CHAPTER XXVII

THE RAJKOT EPISODE

THE Rajkot story is so well-known in India that there is no need for me to attempt to recount it. Bapu's famous fast, the sympathetic attitude of Lord Linlithgow, who referred the matter to the late Sir Maurice Gwyer, then Chief Justice of India, for decision, and the latter's award in favour of Bapu are not forgotten. Nor would there be any pleasure in giving the details of the story in which Sardar Patel, Bapu, and all the rest of us were led up the garden path to champion the cause of a weak and unenlightened Ruler, the Thakore, and his artful and intriguing Minister, Virawala, and to regard the innocent Sir Patrick Cadell, President of the Thakore's Council, and the political agent, Mr. Gibson, as the arch-villains of the piece. This cardinal error, which the Sardar eventually discovered and Bapu described in the *Harijan* when Virawala was found to be playing false, was perhaps in the first instance not unconnected with the history of Bapu's family. They had been Dewans in Kathiawar (nowadays Saurashtra) for generations and felt some innate affection to them. Bapu indeed ordinarily showed great respect towards the rulers.

But there was a pleasant issue also and it is that to which I wish to allude. It brought Bapu and Gibson in touch with one another and, possibly to Bapu's surprise, he discovered that the Political Agent instead of having horns, hooves and a tail was an ordinary friendly mortal.

How heated the atmosphere was at one point will be seen from Mahadev's account of a meeting with Mr. Laithwaite, the Viceroy's Secretary, at my house:—

5th February, 1939.

Mr. Laithwaite came to tea at 5 p.m. and stayed for nearly two hours. Casual talk about tea and flowers and cows and

cattle shows and our previous visits to the Viceroy's House—Mr. Laithwaite particularly mentioning Bapu's broad laugh from corner to corner—led on to the talk of Ba's arrest.

'They must be very comfortable indeed,' said Mr. Laithwaite.

'Yes,' said I, 'but they must be extremely uncomfortable to think of the condition of others who are getting different treatment.' And I mentioned one very disturbing piece of news I had received in the morning. Eight volunteers had been taken far into the interior of the country, severely hammered there and asked to sign forms of apology. This they refused to do. This was followed by more beating, and the confinement of one of them in a room where he was tortured for several hours, with electric shocks every now and then. 'I agree,' I said, 'that all this is very difficult to believe, that there may be some exaggeration, but how can this whole story be manufactured?' Mr. Laithwaite appreciated the cautious way in which I put it and said he had no knowledge of these beatings, etc. I added that during the previous campaign which lasted for nearly three months there were no such stories. And whilst all this was being done there was absolutely no violence on the part of the people, not even the raising of a little finger.

That led to a long dissertation on the part of Mr. Laithwaite about the varying conditions of things in different States, the tradition of personal rule handed down the ages, the necessarily slow process of evolution of the democratic form of government in these States and so on. I mentioned the Butler Committee Report which said that where the demand for responsible government was widespread the Paramount Power was bound to help in suggesting measures for satisfying the demand, provided it did not seek to eliminate the prince. 'That was ten years ago,' said Mr. Laithwaite, 'and I am sure if the report were to be written today, they would have modified the language and defined what they meant by responsible government.' 'The alteration would have been all to our advantage,' said I and we all laughed.

Ghanshyamdasji at this stage brought in the Rajkot question and wondered if the tragedy could not be immediately terminated. Mr. Laithwaite mentioned the *Harijan* article on Rajkot and Bapu's very violent language. 'There are two or three things to be borne in mind,' said I. 'You must remember that he is daily receiv-

ing reports of happenings in Rajkot of which I have already given an instance. Although he receives these reports with a grain of salt, he cannot believe that all that is said can be without any foundation whatsoever. And if these tales are substantially true, I do not know what other language could be used. Then it must not be forgotten that even these articles, couched in very strong language conclude with an appeal to the Viceroy—a thing Gandhiji was not accustomed to do two years ago.'

Ghanshyamdasji particularly mentioned the sentence in the article about the Congress being the ally of the British Government and Bapu's anxiety to have their co-operation. But he was getting the reverse instead and that exasperated him.

I mentioned a third factor. I said, 'The article in question was written a week ago. In the meanwhile there is this communiqué published by you making an attempt to explain the Government's and the Thakore Saheb's position. To that Gandhiji replies with a statement which, if I may say so, holds out the olive branch. Therein he has definitely said that if the question was only of the personnel he could persuade the Sardar to accommodate the Thakore Saheb.'

But Mr. Laithwaite said, 'The public do not have this timetable before them. They read Mr. Gandhi's statement on Saturday and on Sunday they read his article. Look at the *Statesman's* article. There is much to say for what it says. And His Excellency is really surprised that while Mr. Gandhi's letters are couched in the friendliest language his articles are written in a language which is quite the contrary.'

'That is,' I said, 'because the letters are addressed to His Excellency the Viceroy and the articles are addressed to the people. If His Excellency was conducting a campaign, his language in his private correspondence would differ radically from the language of his articles.'

'But,' said Mr. Laithwaite, 'you must agree, as I know Mr. Birla agrees, that it makes the position very difficult for His Excellency. These articles are not confined to India. They are wired home by Reuter, and you must remember the *Statesman's* comment about race animosity. You can imagine what effect it would have on the British public. I wish he wrote to His Excellency as harshly as he desired, but wrote in the Press as mildly as he could.'

'Now that *Statesman* thing is absurd,' said I. 'What has the racial question to do with this? And where does the *Statesman* find that race animosity in Gandhiji's article?'

'You see this repetition day in and day out that the villain of the piece is the British Resident and that he is responsible for acts of *goondaism*. You need see Mr. Gibson only once to know that he is incapable of these things. He is such a mild man that no one would think he was capable of brutalities.'

'No one, certainly not Gandhiji, alleges that Mr. Gibson is personally responsible for these acts of *goondaism*. He does not say that Mr. Gibson personally witnesses these beatings. But it must not be forgotten that it is the Agency Police and these subordinates who believe that they are justified in doing all these things.'

'Do you know the number of Agency Police in Rajkot?' Mr. Laithwaite asked. 'I do not know,' I said, 'but Rajkot State can't have a strong police force and the bulk of the police must be the Agency Police. But I am not sure. I can ascertain. Are you in personal touch with Mr. Gibson?'

'No, not now. The last time I saw him was in November. But I must say that the effect of Mr. Gandhi's articles is different on the general reader from what it would be on us three and even on His Excellency. The average reader is bound to think that Mr. Gibson is being held personally responsible for all these doings, assuming that they *are* happening. And if no race-hatred is meant, should not Mr. Gandhi make it clear?'

'Certainly,' said I, 'he would be the first man to make it clear, for the thing has been remotest from his mind. It is foreign to his nature. The charge was not seriously made even during the fierce Civil Disobedience campaign. And he would also say that Mr. Gibson was not personally responsible for the brutalities. But he will not exculpate Mr. Gibson from the charge of bringing about this breach of promise, for which he has overwhelming evidence. You may discount the value of that evidence, but he cannot disbelieve the evidence of papers he has got from reliable sources.'

As the talk was getting rather heated, Ghanshyamdasji put in, 'But the long and short of it is that you need the proper atmosphere for a re-starting of the negotiations. Is it not so?'

'Yes. The atmosphere is very bad, it has deteriorated considerably since Mr. Gandhi's article. His Excellency was happy to have the letter you brought. But this morning he saw the *Harijan* article and said, "What is the use of this friendly letter?"

'It is the easiest thing in the world to get Gandhiji to clear the atmosphere,' I said, 'if you mean by it these two charges that the *Statesman* has made.'

'But how can you get Mr. Gibson to do anything whilst he is being held up to ridicule as the author of an immoral breach of promise ?'

'I have some papers here,' I said, 'and I can show you how we maintain that he is to blame. I wish Sir Patrick Cadell was here.'

'You mean to say he knows everything about this agreement ? And that he told Mr. Gibson ?'

'I cannot swear that Sir Patrick saw the agreement. But Sir Patrick was there in the palace when the Thakore Saheb wrote that letter. I do not know that Sir Patrick told Mr. Gibson about it. But whatever may be the case, who in the world would believe that the Sardar would accept an agreement which was being interpreted by the Thakore in the way you say it is being done ? In that case the agreement should have been signed by the Sardar and not the Thakore.'

'I have seen that ingenious argument in the *Hindustan Times* article. But why then was not the letter published or made part of the settlement ?'

'Can't you see that the Sardar had to accommodate the Thakore Saheb ? But let me tell you that even the names would have been there in the letter if only the Sardar had been ready to give the names there and then. But he had to consult his co-workers.'

'But don't you think Mr. Patel's letter to Mr. Maneklal shows that the matter of personnel was one of mutual adjustment and that the Sardar had only to suggest the names ?'

'No. You have missed the point. The approval of the Thakore Saheb was confined to seeing whether the names suggested were those of State's people or outsiders. I can prove to you that the only matter of dispute during the negotiations was whether these members should be State's subjects or they may be from outside the State too.' At this stage I showed him the draft with

which Mr. Pattani saw Sir Patrick, the four points which Sir Patrick wanted cleared up—one of the points being that the members should be only State's subjects—and the language of the draft where the wording was that the Sardar should *select* seven names and the Thakore Saheb should nominate them—language to which Sir Patrick had raised no objection whatsoever. 'But,' said I, 'Sir Patrick went back on his promise, because he had seen Mr. Gibson the previous day and he had disapproved of the whole thing.'

'If I am not mistaken,' said Ghanshyamdasji, 'Sir Patrick himself told the Sardar or Pattani that Mr. Gibson had disapproved of it.'

'And why forget the other serious part of the breach?' said I. 'The communiqué issued after the breakdown differs materially from the communiqué announcing the settlement.'

'Yes, Mr. Birla has told me that, but I should like to know wherein it differs.'

I read out to him the portion containing the words 'the widest possible powers' and the portion in the new communiqué where the 'people's share in the administration' was mentioned. I also mentioned the fact that in the private talk with Mr. Gibson he had objected to the phrase 'the widest possible powers' and had succeeded in getting it eliminated. I also said that the Thakore in his notification had used words which he would never have used at the time of the settlement viz. that the people ought not to think of having, at the instigation of outsiders, more than they could digest. We could not help reading the hand of Mr. Gibson in all this.

Ghanshyamdasji again referred to the question of re-opening the negotiations, and Mr. Laithwaite harked back to making the atmosphere ready. 'What exactly do you mean by improving the atmosphere? Please tell me definitely what exactly you would expect Gandhiji to do in order to improve the atmosphere?' Ghanshyamdasji asked.

'You see there have been personal attacks savouring of racial animosity. This I think should definitely be stopped. You don't realise His Excellency's difficulties. However sympathetic he may be, he cannot help until the atmosphere is better,' Laithwaite replied.

'I agree that there should be no personal bitterness because I personally believe that if negotiations are started, Gibson could be extremely helpful and therefore he should not be unnecessarily ruffled.'

'I wonder how far Gibson would be helpful after all these attacks that have been made on him. I am sure he does not deserve them.'

'I don't think I need take an unhopeful view of Gibson's attitude. I remember vividly how Emerson, after he was introduced by Lord Irwin to Bapu, became distinctly friendly and how helpful he was in everything that was subsequently done. I see no reason why Sardar and Gibson could not again start negotiations at some stage and bring about a settlement. I don't expect Gibson to bring any coercion on the Thakore. Yet he could give friendly advice, and I know what friendly advice from the representative of the Paramount Power means. I am expecting that if the atmosphere does improve and negotiations are re-started, His Excellency will direct Gibson privately to give all friendly help in restoring the pact.'

'Yes, I agree, although I do not wish to say what His Excellency will do ; but I can tell you this definitely that if the atmosphere improves, it would definitely contribute towards a satisfactory solution.'

At this stage, I suggested that Ghanshyamdasji might go to Wardha. Laithwaite quietly listened without making any comment.

I said the atmosphere could be cleared but Mr. Laithwaite must know that more serious to my mind than the charge of being personally responsible for brutalities, was the charge of being responsible for the breach of faith. Whilst the one charge could be withdrawn (because it was never made), the other charge stood and would stand. 'But Bapu need not rub that thing in again and again. It is known. The other thing may be cleared up,' said Ghanshyamdasji. 'You can go to Bapu and get him to do that. I am sure that the negotiations could be opened by the Sardar reiterating Bapu's statement to the effect that he could accommodate the Thakore on the question of the personnel, *i.e.*, by the inclusion of a Mussalman and a Bhayat, provided he was given the liberty of adding two more names.'

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‘Was that part of the agreement that he should have a majority of five?’

‘The mention of numbers of 7 and 2 signifies that,’ I said. But we are not here as negotiators. Let the Sardar and Thakore Saheb decide it. But the original terms of the settlement must be restored.’

Mr. Laithwaite indicated that the making of a statement by the Sardar on the lines I had indicated would be helpful.

Mahadev’s account went to the Sardar and in his reply he took a very dim view of Mr. Gibson:—

8th February, 1939.

My dear Mahadev,

I got your letter along with a copy of the substance of your conversation with Mr. Laithwaite. I am afraid I am not inclined to agree with you about your estimate as to their attitude. It is diplomatic but I am afraid, not honest. The *Statesman* has written the last article more frankly, but if we write or say anything about a Gibson or a Beauchamp they attribute motives to us. There is no racial question involved in this. It is a defensive attack on their protected citadel and they are angry. They pretend ignorance when they are convinced of their guilt. Anyway, I see a fierce struggle ahead. I have no doubt that Mr. Gibson has organised forces of *goondaism* all over the Kathiawar States. In Limdi, we see the first overt act of his policy, of which you will feel sorry to hear. There have been three big dacoities in which several people in the villages have been looted and wounded. Armed dacoits have been let loose on an innocent population in the villages in order to terrorise the people who are resisting the tyranny of the State. For the last two or three days people have been sitting round the palace asking for an inquiry but there is no response from the State. Ba* is having a bad time. All this happens not merely with the connivance of Gibson; it must also be at his instigation.

* Kasturba Gandhi.

Yours sincerely,
VALLABHBHAI

Gandhiji’s disillusionment with the Thakore, his fast, the Viceroy’s sympathetic attitude and Sir Maurice

Gwyer's decision in favour of Gandhiji followed. The tension was still unrelieved in mid-April when Mahadev wrote to me as follows:—

Sushila arrived this morning from Rajkot *en route* to Kunjah (Gujrat where she is going to attend her brother's wedding). She said there was a rather remarkable altercation between Bapu and Vallabhbhai one day. He had written three letters surrendering everything to the Mussalmans and the Bhayats. Vallabhbhai was exasperated. Bapu said: 'I know that you have to suffer the consequence of my many stupid acts.' To this Vallabhbhai replied: 'No, there has been no stupid act up to now, but these three letters that you propose to send *are* stupid!!' Bapu laughed but later on seriously said: 'Should I not then retire from all active leadership and live a life of contemplation?' I do not know how the talk went on further but the upshot was that the letters were torn up. Sushila also said that Bapu had discovered that Vallabhbhai had a better knowledge—and more instinctive knowledge—of the working of vicious human nature than he himself had and he once exclaimed: 'This step would have been suicidal'. (The reference was to the step of going on fast if the Mussalmans did not keep their word). So our long telegram of that morning was more than justified.

But the whole business has set me thinking furiously. You will remember the long talk we had the other morning on the possibilities and implications of *ahimsa*, and what I have heard from Sushila leaves me wondering whether *ahimsa* is any good for the vindication of *earthly* rights—a proposition which was mooted by Mr. Arthur Moore in that famous controversy. When we next meet Bapu and can get a little time with him we should discuss this aspect of the matter threadbare with him. For the moment I do not know what the future has in store for us. We seem to be driven headlong to some indescribable, inscrutable destiny.

I could not but express agreement with Mahadev's doubts:—

But frankly speaking I not only agree with you that *ahimsa* for securing worldly achievements is a doubtful proposition, but

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I have also got my grave doubts whether what has happened at Rajkot from beginning to end could be called *ahimsa* at all ! In fact, as I told you the other day I am not convinced that this fasting business is not in itself an act of coercion. I don't see how you are going to change the heart of your adversary through these ultimatums. The Sardar's position could be understood because he never pretended to represent any high philosophy and his fight in Rajkot was more or less an unarmed rebellion, but not necessarily non-violent. And thus we cannot complain if we countenanced resistance from Virawala and the Thakore in our own coin. I don't see how Gibson could help because we never spared Gibson. But of course the Viceroy's responsibility is there. But he may have his own difficulties which we do not know. We have been impatient—which helps none. Testing events by Bapu's philosophy, I do not feel that it could be said that we have been free from blame. I strongly feel that there should be no more of this fasting and I hope we shall be able to prevail upon Bapu when we all meet him in Calcutta. If there is to be a quiet chat, I suggest that yourself, myself and Bapu should talk alone. In the presence of the Sardar, I have not got the nerve to launch an attack.

I rather enjoyed what you wrote about the conversation between Bapu and Sardar. The Sardar talks less and seems to talk without patience but his instinct is sound. The only thing is that even he did not find himself a good match for Virawala.

But the picture was now again changing completely. Mahadev and Mr. Gibson met. On May 19th Mahadev wrote:—

I wonder what you will say regarding the latest statement of Bapu. It is our great misfortune that Bapu often resents our reaction to his step, but later comes to the same conclusion as us and then expresses it with a vehemence that embarrasses us all. Very often we remark on his impatience. He said he was not impatient and if he was he had a right to be so. Now he says his impatience was a sign of *himsa* (violence) and his running to the Paramount Power, his characterisation of the Thakore as a fraud and Virawala as 'shifty' and a curse to the State was impatient and, therefore, violent. I had a long argument about

the statement. I said, 'Don't you think your approaching the P.P. and accepting their offer of the Chief Justice's arbitration was better morally and tactically than would have been your confining yourself only to the Thakore Sahib? For satyagraha against a slave, for that is what every ruler is and nothing more, is unjustifiable'. To this he said: 'You are talking from the result, and your statement that the Thakore is a slave of the Paramount Power is only half true. And even if he were no better than a slave, my *satyagraha*, if it was of the highest quality, would help him to throw off his slavery. Anyway, my decision to throw away the Award is the result of self-inspection, the anxiety to be rid of an oppression, an incubus that was pressing upon my breast all my waking hours.'

I had about 90 minutes talk with Mr. Gibson. He was very nice, quite frank, and even deferential. He has not yet forgotten the old sores—*goondalism* and the publication of what he maintains was an utterly inaccurate report of his talk, and so on. But I must say I liked him and I am glad I met him. The more I meet these people the more I am convinced that the *whole* of our agitation was a picture of our impatience, and much might have been achieved with a little more patience. However, no lesson is learnt too late.

I was able to corroborate concerning Mr. Gibson in my reply:—

My Gwalior Mill Manager and Secretary were always full of praise for him as a man. He was reported to be very frank and nice to everyone and specially to children. He would come and play with them in the Mills. He could not have been both very good in personal behaviour and very bad in political behaviour; and he received enough abuse from Bapu. Does he deserve any revised opinion of Bapu? I, of course, believe that he was partly responsible for the breach. But he got much more than he deserved. My men would not admit that he could be a *goonda*.

Lothian writes as follows:—

It looks as if the Mahatma is gradually swinging Congress round to the policy he outlined to me when I went to stay with

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him at Segaoon. I think, however, it will be necessary to limit the pace at which full Government is developed in the States. The people as yet had no experience of representative institutions, and if Congress pushes them too far, it may push the Mohammedans out of India altogether. I am more convinced than ever that the basic principles of the Federation are the only ones upon which India can move forward and avoid calamity. If you see the Mahatma, please give him my kindest regards.

Will you please place my letter before Bapu?

Bapu now made an overture and Gibson wrote to him as follows:—

The Residency, Rajkot,
Balachadi, 27-5-39.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

It is very nice of you to have written as you have. Thank you very much. More work there was in those days which you recall, but I don't mind work if it is worth doing. So much that one has to do nowadays is not. The people who were really overworked I think were the telegraph and telephone operators! Residents (if I may let you into a secret) are always overworked.

I expect to be back in Rajkot on the night of May 31st and I have written to Mr. Mahadev Desai and suggested having a talk on the following morning. And of course I should like to have another talk with you before you leave but I expect you will be very busy that morning, so I don't suggest it; but if you can spare a few minutes, please come at whatever time suits you.

Yours sincerely,
E. C. GIBSON

And here is an extract from another letter from Mahadev:—

Mr. Gibson arrives tomorrow evening and both Bapu and I will have an interview with him. Perhaps you do not know how I started my interview with him when I saw him about a week ago. I told him that all I knew about him was what I had heard from the Gwalior Mill Manager about his friendliness with children and readiness to come and play with them occasionally.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE MAHATMA

I think that was enough to touch the right chord in his heart and we talked merrily, as you know, for 90 minutes.

I forgot to tell you that Mr. Gibson has a delightful but dry sense of humour. I enclose a copy of his latest letter to Bapu in reply to the one written by Bapu to him expressing his regret for having been a constant source of worry during the days of the fast, which after all had to be infructuous !

CHAPTER XXVIII

SOME CROSSWORD PUZZLES AND SOLUTIONS

AT this time Bapu puzzled us all with apparent contradictions in his views and statements. Looking back on this now, we can see that he was fundamentally right in all that he did as our national leader, and that but for him we might not yet be an independent nation. But it is clear that even at this stage he had dawning doubts about the capacity of the masses to assimilate his doctrine of *ahimsa* or to remain non-violent and had premonitions of the tragedy of Partition and the events that accompanied and followed it. In bitter grief he confessed that what he had believed to be true non-violence was a 'weak copy', namely passive resistance. We ordinary mortals can recognise that passive resistance for any community or nation on a large scale can be a very effective weapon, and that those who lack guns and bayonets can by this means sometimes succeed without them.

In my account for Bapu of an interview with Lord Linlithgow on the 2nd April, 1940, I wrote:—

He made a grievance of the fact that whenever Gandhiji talked to him, he always made it clear that he did not represent Congress views. That put him (the Viceroy) to great disadvantage. He followed Gandhiji only to find that he was left in the air. Next time when he would see him, he would see him as the representative of the Congress. . . . He gave me the impression of a tired man who is extremely disappointed, but he feels a genuine grievance against Gandhiji that while he tried his best to help, there was no reciprocation. He did not want a full settlement with Muslims, but only wanted Gandhiji to satisfy himself that any scheme that was proposed would work.

About the same time, on April 4th, Bapu was writing to the Viceroy:—

I should be very sorry indeed to discover that I left on your mind the impression that if Dominion Status of the Statute of Westminster variety was meant, the Congress would accept it... Whilst I am writing to you I also want to get another thing off my mind. I have already told you that in my son Devadas you have a warm-hearted champion. He has been writing long letters to me trying to convince me that I did you a gross injustice in abruptly terminating our last conversation. He discounts my assurance that the conversation ended because both you and I saw that the gulf between us was found to be too unbridgeable to be handled at that moment by prolonging our conversations. Indeed it was your expression that it would be more manly for us to end the conversations the very day we began them and make the confession to the public. I at once accepted the accuracy of your characterisation. Devadas says that was said out of courtesy, if not British pride, and that you were eager to prolong the conversations. He is thus most disconsolate, and thinks that my interpretation of your attitude is wrong. You alone can help me to settle this domestic dispute.

Mahadev, too, was unhappy. On the 12th he wrote to me:—

Devadas' differences with Bapu are still there. He says: Had you told the Viceroy, 'We ourselves do not want any kind of Dominion Status, but tell us what brand you want to give us', then the Viceroy would have replied, 'Let us postpone discussions on this subject for some future date; it is no use talking about it now.' His line of reasoning is sound enough, but what can we do? At times Bapu creates misunderstandings which he cannot solve. This he does not do deliberately, but he is so multi-sided that while the opposite party sees one thing, Bapu has a different thing in his mind.

Then when I reminded Bapu about your question, he said, 'Why ask the Viceroy about it; it will be seen to afterwards.' That is why he has made no mention of it in his reply.

Another puzzle led me to write on the 17th to Mahadevbhai:—

You may have drawn the attention of Bapu towards a rejoinder of Liaquat Ali Khan. I fear Liaquat Ali's criticism

has some strength. Bapu's writings, if they are to be taken literally, do sound inconsistent. We know Bapu will have no difficulty in giving a correct interpretation ; but the fact remains that, more often than not, Bapu is misunderstood by his opponents, and even those who are in close touch with him find it difficult at times to gauge his mind correctly.

When I was in Wardha, Bapu was in fact arguing against Rajaji who argued in favour of partition. And now he says he would resist it although in a non-violent manner, with all the force at his command. Such misunderstanding is not confined to the Viceroy or to Liaquat Ali but also to many other quarters. Moore, with whom I was lunching the day before yesterday at his house, was very puzzled. He says he reads so much contradictory matter in the *Harijan* that he virtually gets confused. He wants at times to write to support Bapu, but he himself does not know what exactly Bapu is leading up to and thinks that there is confusion in Bapu's mind. We all know he is not correct in reading confusion in Bapu's articles, but we also ought to know what people feel and think about them.

Bapu was unmoved by Hitler's domination of Europe. On the 16th May, Mahadev wrote to me:—

There was a telephone call from Devadas. Holland has surrendered. Belgium will go the same way. Now Bapu should establish direct contact with the Cabinet and send a long cable to the Cabinet through the Viceroy. That might yield some result. Bapu said there was nothing in the news. Hitler's stock with Bapu is going up. I remarked that so long as he said nothing publicly, it was going to be all right !

On the 21st Bapu himself wrote to me:—

Europe is at present the meeting ground of people gathered together for mutual destruction just as the Yadavas did. Be that as it may, my heart is hardened.

With Bapu's blessings.

Bapu unfortunately took it for granted that Britain had lost the War and wrote a letter to Lord Linlithgow in which he said so. Mahadev, who apparently disapproved of this action, wrote to me on June the 6th:—

A reply to that letter has arrived. In his letter Bapu had written: 'This manslaughter must be stopped. You are losing ; if you persist it will only result in greater bloodshed. Hitler is not a bad man. If you will call it off today, he will follow suit. If you want to send me to Germany or anywhere else, I am at your disposal. You can also inform the Cabinet about this.' I was convinced they would treat this as a piece of impudence. The reply that has arrived is excellent : 'We are engaged in a struggle ; so long as we do not achieve our aim, we are not going to budge. I know your solicitude for us, but everything is going to be all right. You have expressed your concern for our two sons, which has greatly touched us.' That is all.

Meantime, Bapu was threatening a fast, not for some great national issue but on account of some supposed petty theft in the Ashram, and confusion reigned at Sevagram. Mahadev wrote on June the 3rd:—

There is always some excitement of one kind or another here. Somebody had stolen a letter, written to Bapu by a girl, and a pen placed alongside it. Afterwards the pen was found where it had been thrown away ; torn bits of the letter were also found. This has shocked Bapu so much that he has declared : 'This cannot be an act of the servants. The culprit is hidden among us. If nobody comes forward with a confession by Friday, then I will go on a fast from Saturday.' We have been trying our best to find out the culprit and to reason with everybody, but so far without any result. Such psychological acts swallow up a great deal of our time.

And again on the 6th:—

The episode of the theft has taken an ugly turn. Yesterday Bapu said all of a sudden to A., 'I suspect you. Why not make a confession.' I was also taken aback. A—replied, 'I did not take it. I am innocent. Allah is my witness.' She has gone on fast from today. I told Bapu that by thus accusing her, he acted with the same amount of precipitancy with which he made public his intention to fast. Once he feels that he has done this girl a wrong he will try to make amends by doing justice to her a hundred times over ; and that will be an act of

injustice in itself. Bapu has already acted like this in many other instances. I told Bapu all this, but he remained unmoved. Up to the present moment the intention to fast stands. If you will give a ring tomorrow, more might be gathered.

Needless to say, I did give a ring—as Mahadev suggested—and pleaded with Bapu. Mahadev wrote in reply:—

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

We received your telephone call. I had already reasoned with Bapu sufficiently. I said : 'It would be understandable if you went on fast as a measure of penance if you know who committed the sin. But to go on fast in order to find out the culprit, would be something not quite right. It would be assuming the attributes of God and an expression of pride if we claim to know or try to know everything. You must therefore give up the idea of going on fast. There are many uncertain factors in it.' Bapu wrote, 'I have your viewpoint before me.'

This gives me hope that after all Bapu may not launch on a fast. I am not prepared to accept that somebody belonging to this place has stolen the letter or the pen. We may all be mid-gets, but that we would go the whole length of compelling Bapu to undertake a fast before we made a clean breast of an act of petty theft, is a thing beyond my comprehension.

On the 10th, however, Mahadev reported good news:—

Bapu's fast stands postponed, and this should be held mainly due to my strenuous endeavours and strong opposition. Never before had I been so vehement in my opposition to any of Bapu's steps. Even after Bapu had started his fast I wrote a long letter to him in which I said it was not a religious fast and that until it was discontinued, I would persist in my opposition. Within two hours Bapu decided to give up the fast.

But meanwhile Rajaji, myself and others were seeking some settlement with Britain, and the Congress did not ignore the larger issue. They put forward a well-reasoned proposal for the formation of a national government which would aid in the prosecution of the war

to a successful finish. But by this time distrust on the part of those Britons who had themselves been inveterate appeasers and encouragers of Hitler had gone too deep and the Congress proposals were rejected. It is fair to add that they received some support from Britons in Britain and even from some of those in India.

48, Bazlullah Road,
Thyagarayanagar, Madras,
16th August, 1940.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

The local papers have reproduced the main part of Mr. Arthur Moore's article commenting on Mr. Amery's statement and supporting the Congress demand for a provisional National Government. Please convey to him that I greatly appreciate the unanswerable way in which he has put the case. I hope it has gone fully to England.

Yours sincerely,
C. RAJAGOPALACHARIAR

CHAPTER XXIX

A PERSONAL EXPLANATION

THIS chapter is 'on a point of personal explanation', as members used to say in the old Legislative Assembly.

At the end of 1940 I had a first-class row with Lord Linlithgow. The only reason why I mention this now is that it is closely connected with a then prevalent notion of my own activities at this time. Put bluntly, this was that I did not call myself a Congressman but secretly largely contributed to its finances ; thus I was keeping a foot in both camps.

Whether or not some people also gave me the benefit of the doubt and ascribed my support of Congress also to patriotism, I do not know. Re-reading my own account of my final interview with Sir Gilbert Laithwaite, I am inclined to think that both he and the Viceroy did attribute it to patriotism and saw nothing wrong in it. They merely took the view that the Congress at that time was hindering and not helping the war effort and, therefore, believing as they did that I was financing the Congress, the Viceroy felt a difficulty about publicly maintaining close relations with me while sending Congressmen to jail. This did not necessarily mean that he had any less regard for me, or for those whom he felt compelled to send to jail and with whom he would be quite willing to resume cordial relations when the struggle was over. But I flared up and was furiously angry, because I felt that he of all men should have been aware that I did not finance the Civil Disobedience Movement. My devotion was to Bapu, to whom I could refuse nothing and who was accustomed to turn to me for help in all his plans. But Bapu was well aware that I was not a Congressman and he did not either ask me to subscribe to Civil Disobedience Movement funds or

divert any of the sums he received through me for such a purpose. He himself did not provide funds for Congress nor was he ordinarily accustomed to appeal for funds for it. Such was his influence with the public, that he was a magnificent money-raiser, but his appeals were on behalf of the Harijans, cottage industries, basic education and many more constructive projects.

Here is what I wrote to Mahadev at the time:

29th December, 1940.

Immediately on coming here I wrote to Laithwaite asking him to get me an appointment with the Viceroy and added that I would also like to see him after I had met H.E. Came back the reply. He was afraid there was no hope of seeing the Viceroy but that he himself would be very glad to see me. I suspected that there had been a departure from the old policy but I refused to believe this until I had seen Laithwaite.

Next day S. C. Mitra was going to see the Viceroy. The Viceroy only a week before had told him that he was keeping in touch with Gandhiji through myself whom he called 'my friend, Mr. Birla.' Naturally therefore Mitra wanted to know if he could place any proposal before the Viceroy. I told him that you had given Laithwaite a formula and that Mitra should press the same on the Viceroy. Mitra, after seeing the Viceroy, could not remember anything about the formula. But when Mitra told him that he might discuss it again with me, the Viceroy said : 'Mr. Birla is a friend of mine, but he is these days financing the Movement. Although he has every right to do so, since it is his own money, yet the fact that he is financing the Movement deters me from meeting him just now.' When I heard this, my suspicion was confirmed. The policy had changed. All the same, I went to see Laithwaite.

On meeting him I told Laithwaite that although I had come to discuss something constructive about the present impasse, I however felt that I should tell him first of all how rudely shocked I was to hear what the Viceroy told Mitra about me. But Laithwaite replied, 'But is it not the common talk here ?' I said, 'I do not care what the common talk is, but do you believe it?' 'No.' 'You do,' said I. And I added that since I had discovered that I was not trusted by the Viceroy, I did not want to

pursue the matter further. Laithwaite said, 'But aren't you a Congressman?' I replied, 'No, I am not a Congressman. But I *am* a Gandhi-man. To me Gandhiji is more like a father. I am deeply interested in all his philanthropic and constructive work. Gandhiji has never asked me to join the political war. The Viceroy should have known by this time, that no man among Indians has worked harder to help him (the Viceroy) or stood more loyally by him than myself. And this is how the Viceroy has reciprocated. If the Viceroy feels that on the one hand I come to him as a friend and on the other I am secretly acting against him, then I have no desire to waste his time any more. The Viceroy has wronged me by suspecting my honesty and I have no desire to allow myself to be snubbed any more.'

Laithwaite felt a little nonplussed. He said, 'But what's wrong with having political affiliations of one's own liking?' I said certainly there would be nothing wrong. But it *would* be absolutely wrong if a man pretended to be one thing while he was something quite different. I had done my best to make myself personally known to the Viceroy and Laithwaite. But evidently even after five years they had failed to establish human contact with me. They were now suspecting my honesty. And so I had no desire to continue this sort of relation any more.

Laithwaite tried to soothe me and wanted to know what exactly was the constructive proposal that I wanted to give him. But I said I had lost all self-confidence to discuss any constructive proposal. He said, 'What difference does it make whether you come as a friend or as an opponent?' I said, 'It does. If I come as an opponent, then I don't cut much ice. I can cut ice only if I come as a friend. And now that I am not recognised as a friend, I have no desire to talk further.' On being pressed further, halfheartedly I told him what I had wanted to talk about. He again tried to soothe me.

He came to the outer precincts of his office to see me off and showed all courtesy. But I was not in a mood to be soothed. This ends the matter. He said, 'We could always meet and discuss things.' But I told him that after this snub by the Viceroy, I was not going to the Viceroy's house again and that this was the last chapter of my talks with him.

You know how I have defended the Viceroy before Bapu and how I have acted as if I was the Viceroy's representative.

And this is the way he has reciprocated. Is it not stupidity ? But let not Bapu misjudge the Viceroy. Who knows if he may not himself be a victim of circumstances.

In any case, this brings to an end my relations with the Viceroy. What wooden minds these men have got !

CHAPTER XXX

BAPU AS CORRESPONDENT

MY readers may have remarked that I have quoted more freely from my correspondence with Bapu's confidential secretaries than with himself. I wrote more often to them because I did not wish to throw upon him the burden of replying to me himself. Such was the sweetness of his disposition that he would undoubtedly have felt himself obliged to do so. In any case I knew that all my letters addressed to his secretaries were put before him. Unfortunately hundreds of well-meaning admirers, the majority of them personally unknown to him, were continually writing to him direct and to these he usually replied personally. This was a tax both upon his time and his health, and as his correspondents were proud of his letters and usually kept them as trophies, few public men have ever left such a voluminous correspondence behind them.

Bapu, however, did continue to write to me himself at intervals. And the amusing thing was that, whereas I was intensely interested in his health and, when he was not staying with me in Delhi, I was continually sending telegrams to his Ashram if his blood-pressure was reported to be up or his weight down, he himself in his letters was chiefly preoccupied, often quite unnecessarily, with my health. I have already recounted the careful instructions which he wrote to me many years ago when, as a young man, I visited England for the first time. This interest continued, and some of his letters are hardly suitable for publication owing to their intimate details and somewhat medical flavour. Here, however, are a couple of examples written near the end of his life:—

Sevagram, 20-3-45.

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

I have sent you an express telegram, a copy of which is enclosed. What are you taking, how much and when, what vegetables are you taking, and are you taking them raw, or boiled? I hope the water is not thrown away. Bread prepared from bran will not be a better substitute for toast. The flour is not separated from the chaff, I hope. If you are taking milk, then how much? Whatever else you may take, you must take one half-ounce of butter well spread over the toast or bread prepared from bran, together with salad. If you develop indigestion, then you can discontinue other things, but not butter. Take a deep breath; it is very necessary. Close one nostril and breathe deeply with the other—by increasing it gradually you can do it for half an hour at a stretch. Utter the word Ram with every breath you take. When doing breathing exercises, you should have air on all sides; open air is preferable. This has to be done in the morning as a matter of course; and thereafter when the food has been digested. This exercise must be taken at least four times a day. After taking a deep breath, it should be discharged. This practice should be observed from the beginning. This moves the bowels and induces sleep. If you will do this exercise wisely you will get rid of the cough soon enough.

With Bapu's blessings.

9-4-45.

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

Can you read my handwriting? If you find any difficulty, then in future I shall dictate my letters.

The days are passing and the time for a heart-to-heart talk is not available. Therefore let me write out what I have to say. A reply can be given in a few sentences. This does not, of course, mean that I am withdrawing what I have said. I am not going away soon but I do not wish to postpone what I have to say.

1. My work has increased. What I am trying to achieve at present is that all the institutions established by me are self-sufficient and no more money is expected from me. This will, of course, take some time, and meanwhile I shall have to find money for them as well. These organisations are: (1) A. I. Spinners Association, (2) Village Industries Association, (3) Nai Talim, (4) Hindustani Prachar and (5) the Ashram. It is about

the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th institutions that I am now speaking. So far as the 5th organisation—the Ashram—is concerned, it can never be self-dependent, though there is no lack of effort on my part to achieve even that. The Ashram also includes the hospital. The accounts of the hospital are maintained separately. Efforts are being made to get the money needed for its expenses from different sources ; still the annual expenses of the Ashram alone are nearly Rs. 1,00,000. This I am quoting from memory. The Ashram is not in need of funds at present. Rameshwardas sends the needed money. As for 2, 3 and 4, money is needed for these. I believe Rameshwardas has sent some money. Money is needed for the propagation of Hindi and for Nai Talim. Probably I shall be needing Rs. 2,00,000. Are you disposed to take this burden on your shoulders? As for the Sufferers' Fund, there is a mention of it in Rameshwardas' letter. I have also given my opinion.

2. Now for the colleagues' relationships and my experiment. The experiment has been suspended on account of the colleagues, nor do I find anything improper in it. As for myself, I am the same celibate that I was in 1906 when I took a vow, and in 1901 when I began as one. Today I am a better celibate than I was in 1901. What my experiment has achieved is that it has made me a confirmed celibate. The experiment was for the purpose of becoming a perfect celibate and, God willing, it will lead to perfection. You wanted to talk to me and ask questions on this subject. You can do both ; please do not hesitate. I shall certainly not tolerate hesitation in one with whom I have intimate connections and whose money I make use of to such a great extent.

It is good that both the brothers are together. This letter is not only for both the brothers, but for all the brothers and other members of the family.

I was thinking of writing a smaller letter, but it has become quite lengthy. There are two main things in it.

With Bapu's blessing.

PS.—I forgot to mention one thing. You have given Rs. 50,000 for the Ashram land which has been transferred to the Goshala. The list that Chimanlal has sent now also mentions the Ashram field which has a well in it. If that is so, then the house is also gone. But that cannot be. There seems to be some mistake.

Though Jankidevi and others wrote, there was no result. Now, if you consider that the entire land with the well has been give to the Goshala, then some amount will have to be deducted from your Rs. 50,000. Do what you think proper.

BAPU

But at a still later period he wrote to me much more frequently.

* * * *

It is remarkable that at a time of such political excitement, when he himself was carrying heavy responsibilities, he could detach himself from the hurly-burly and busy himself with the minutest details concerning the welfare schemes he had undertaken. Thus, on the 16th October 1945, he wrote me a long letter, the first part of which was entirely devoted to school buildings and a sanatorium at Nasik. He continued :—

Let me also tell you the Sardar's view of this matter. He holds that I should not interest myself in all this to such an extent and should be content to secure financial assistance. . . . The Sardar is a keen observer of human psychology, and his regard for me has been of the deepest kind. Therefore, I thought it prudent to place his view of things also before you, so that you may be able to form your own detached judgment.

There follows more about Nasik and the nature-cure system. Then follows an interesting passage :—

In spite of my obvious interest in this matter, I would like you to believe that I am supervising and doing this work in a detached spirit. My programme to live to 125 carried with it the condition that I should maintain an attitude of detachment to an extent possible of human achievement. Whether it is or is not possible, or how it is possible is a thing I do not know, nor do I care to know. Let me do what I regard as my duty, keeping that as an ideal before me. Not that I do not know that it is difficult to realise that ideal ; but, then, I have spent a lifetime in doing difficult things.

With Bapu's blessing.

That he was an extremely shrewd businessman, in the interest of his various good causes, the following letter will illustrate :—

12-7-46.

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

You know nearly ten lacs of rupees of the Kasturba Trust are at present lying in fixed deposit account with the Central and the United Commercial Bank, with the Holding Trustees' sanction. The Central Bank pays interest for a period of 12 months and the United Commercial Bank pays at the rate of $2\frac{1}{2}\%$. As the Trust is devoted to philanthropic work, it would be proper if the Banks pay to the Trust what they realise by way of Government loans or from other sources. This means that the Trust must get at least 3% interest. I am writing to Sir Homi Mody about the interest from the Central Bank, and to you about the interest from the United Commercial Bank. It would be proper if you, in your capacity as the Chairman of the Bank, sanction 3% interest.

I am starting for Panchgani tomorrow. Please send your reply there.

With Bapu's blessings.

He called me at Panchgani and I went there. He had very big plans for nature-cure which he discussed but subsequently dropped the scheme.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE COMING OF INDEPENDENCE

As may be imagined, we had an agitated time at the end of the War, in the first half of 1945. But the scene changed so completely when the Labour Government came to power in August that there is little point in dwelling on the comings and goings of those days: the Wavell plan, the Simla conference and all the other excitements. Mr. Jinnah, whom too many made the mistake of dismissing as a bluffer, proved to be an insurmountable obstacle to all-Indian unity, and a ruthlessly determined man. The change of government in Britain did nothing to move this obstacle, and at first the significance of the change in Britain was not sufficiently grasped in India. How hard does suspicion die!

Sir Stafford Cripps wrote to me:

I do hope that your Congress friends will give us some help by not being purely negative in their outlook.

The statements made by Congress were not very helpful to those of us here who are trying to push this matter through and tend to add enormous weight to the arguments of those opposing.

I am most grateful to you for what you have done and are doing to assist in smoothing the way. It certainly is the *intention* of H.M.G. to proceed with the matter but we cannot succeed without *help* from India.

In my reply I wrote:—

You will hear rather intemperate speeches at election time. But they should be discounted. After all, an election is an election, and the British Election was no less bitter than our Election. Besides, there is the past background and the difference between British psychology in England and out here. And above all this, unfortunately, the Indonesian trouble is agitating the mind of the public a great deal. I am hoping that H.M.G. will make a helpful move towards the solution of this question too. Democracy and

self-government for Indonesians are no less necessary than for other nations. I dare say you have nothing but sympathy with this aspiration. The solution of such allied questions must have a great effect on the mind of all Asiatic nations.

I definitely see a bright and friendly future. Much will depend on how both sides act, which again will depend on the proper approach and personal contacts.

I wish there were more personal contacts at this stage because the next six months are going to be very crucial for the relations between the two countries. I have already made this suggestion to some of my friends here. But they all seem to be very busy at present with the elections. How I wish some people from your side would visit India in their individual capacity.

Let us, however, on both sides do our best to smoothen the position and I have no doubt in my own mind that, God willing, it will be possible to establish permanent friendly relations between the two countries which will be to the good of the whole world.

I had much correspondence at this time with Mr. Arthur Henderson. The Cabinet Mission, consisting of Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr. Alexander, duly arrived. Sir Stafford Cripps and Pethick-Lawrence were well-known friends of India and it might, one supposes, have been clear to the average intelligent man that they fully intended to carry out the wartime promise of the British Government to proceed immediately with India's independence as soon as hostilities ceased and without waiting for the signing of a peace treaty. The fates were, however, driving us inexorably towards Partition. The Congress could not believe that the Cabinet Mission Plan was expressly designed in order to avoid Partition; indeed, they regarded it as the latest manifestation of a 'divide and rule' policy, in which they had been brought up to believe and which, no doubt, at some time had been adopted by Britons in India though frowned upon at Westminster. In any case, the Cabinet Mission Plan was rejected, the Congress saying that they would accept it only if allowed

to put their own interpretation on it, an interpretation which Mr. Attlee, the British Prime Minister, plainly told them was not correct, since it was not that of its authors, who naturally might be supposed to know. Rajaji, as usual, kept his head and wrote to me :—

20-5-46.

My dear Ghanshyamdasji,

I read the Working Committee's resolution in the papers this morning. It is as I feared—crying for 16 annas in the rupee and repeating the old story.

I wonder if you have any more cheerful things to say.

I somehow or other not only believed in the inevitability of Partition but always considered this as a good way out of our difficulties.

I was particularly anxious about Sir Stafford's health in an unaccustomed climate at the hottest time of the year. He showed such signs of fatigue that, when I remarked on this to Gandhiji, he said, 'Tell Sir Stafford that I can doctor him without fees.' Bapu liked nothing better than doctoring people and had drawn up very strict dietary rules for himself. So I sent a letter to Sir Stafford full of dietary hints, along with a supply of fruit and vegetables. In his reply, Sir Stafford wrote:—

April 6, 1946.

I was particularly touched with Mr. Gandhi's offer, which I take in all seriousness since he, I know, shares the views of the lady who looks after my health in England (Beatrice Brett). I shall certainly ask him if I feel that I need any doctor.

As to what you say about proteins, I have—since you spoke—asked for some sour milk to be provided. I had not thought of it before, but it is the form of milk that I really enjoy and which suits me. So you see your advice has been of great service already.

The Cabinet Mission returned to England without much success. Congress' acceptance of what was called 'the long term plan' was considered a reason for inviting

it to form a government, but this enraged Mr. Jinnah, who previously—on behalf of his party—had appeared to outmanoeuvre the Congress by accepting both parts of it, the short and the long term. He denounced Lord Wavell, accusing him of bad faith and at first steadily refused to have anything to do with the formation of an interim government. Finally, however, he allowed representatives of his party to join while he himself remained aloof. It was evident that he put his representatives in, not in any spirit of coalition, but as watchdogs to see that their claims did not go by default. Hence from the start the interim Ministry was never a happy family, but a battlefield for two warring elements as unlikely to mix as oil and water. The terrible massacre, known as the Great Calcutta Killing, which followed was a reflection of ruthlessness elsewhere and the lives of thousands of innocent people counted for but little in the plans of politicians. I wrote to Sir Stafford Cripps in October:—

The League is joining the Interim Government in a sullen mood. Jinnah refused the terms offered by Jawaharlalji while he accepted the same terms from the Viceroy. This does not augur well for future understanding.

* * * *

But more than politics the present poverty of our people needs serious attention from our Government. It has not been possible, however, for the Government to tackle economics. They are busy with politics which at present means only Jinnah !

In those difficult days both Bapu and Mr. Nehru worked heroically in Bengal and Bihar, where reprisals between the two communities were taking place. Sir Stafford wrote to me on the 18th November 1946:—

I think Gandhiji's contribution to pacification has been very marked and I am most grateful to him for all he has done.

A long letter which Bapu wrote me speaks for itself:—

26-11-46.

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

You know I am staying at Srirampur all by myself, with Prof. Nirmal Chandra and Parasuram as my companions. The house where I am putting up belongs to a family of good people. There is only one Hindu house in the entire village, the rest are all Muslims. There are hundreds of villages over here which do not maintain much contact with each other by means of conveyance after the water dries up. The result is that work is possible only on foot. Therefore, only desperadoes, hooligans, or able-bodied gentlemen can maintain contact among themselves. I am living in one such village at present, and intend to spend my time in a village similar to this. It is my intention to stay on here just as long as the Hindus and Muslims do not become sincerely well-disposed towards each other. God alone can keep man's resolve unshaken. Good-bye to Delhi, to Sevagram, to Uruli, to Panchgani—my only desire is to do or die. This will also put my non-violence to the test, and I have come here to emerge successful from this ordeal. If you are anxious to see me, then you can come here. I personally do not see any necessity for it. You can send your messenger or if you wish to send letters etc., by hand, then that also you can do.

I am not going in to the Constituent Assembly; it is not quite necessary either. Jawaharlal, Sardar, Rajen Babu, Rajaji, Maulana—any one or all five can go there—or Kripalani.

Send this message to them :—

If it is possible to arrange for a sitting of the Constituent Assembly only with the help of the military, then it is better not to arrange for it. If it can be arranged peacefully, then the laws can be framed only for the participating provinces. Let us see what will be the future of the police and the military. We have also to see what Muslim majority provinces will do, how the British Government will conduct itself, and how the princes will behave themselves. I believe the State Paper of April 15 will have to be changed probably. The job is complicated enough, if we work independently. I have only given an indication of how I view things.

Friends will also do well to bear in mind that what I am doing here is not in the name of the Congress. Nor is there any thought of associating it with this work. The work is purely

from the viewpoint of non-violence. Anybody, if he so desires, can publicly oppose my work. That in fact is his right—his duty even. Therefore, whosoever wishes to do anything, let him do it fearlessly. If anybody wants to warn me about anything, let him do that also.

Please send a copy of this to Sardar so that he may tell the others named above. Or you can send copies of it to them and other friends yourself.

Write to me direct so that I may reply. Pyarelal, Sushila, etc., all are in different villages.

With Bapu's blessings.

In a very long letter—much too long to quote in full—which I wrote to Sir Stafford at this painful period I gave a gloomy picture of the situation:—

After the Congress entered the Interim Government, the Viceroy, advised by Mr. Abell, did not allow us a moment's rest to settle with the League. By his tactics he continued nursing the intransigence of the Muslim League. Jinnah went on abusing all and sundry. *Dawn* continued writing violent articles. And the Viceroy went on kowtowing to Jinnah.

The League then entered the Government. We heaved a sigh of relief and concluded that the co-operation of the League in the Constituent Assembly was assured. We were told such assurances were taken from Mr. Jinnah. Nothing was done. At the last moment, the League showed its hand and refused to walk in. The Viceroy acquiesced.

Immediately after the League joined the Government, things looked like settling down. The riots perhaps taught everyone that violence would not pay. As you know, the riots started in Calcutta. The Muslims attacked on Direct Action Day and the Hindus retaliated. Muslims suffered more than the Hindus. They smarted and planned to revenge Calcutta. And so came Noakhali. The mass conversion and abduction and forced marriages infuriated the Hindus; and so came Bihar followed by Meerut.

Jinnah advocated exchange of population—a stupid proposition. No Muslim worth the name supported it. But people in the U. P., Bihar and other places who are the biggest bulwarks of the League began to realise that even under a Pakistan those

who were residing in the Hindu areas would still have to be there, and it would not help them in the least. The Leaguers in the U.P. wanted to compromise, and hints were thrown out of a coalition in the U. P. Had we succeeded, this should have led to compromises in other places.

But then just at that psychological moment—as if it were to upset the whole plan—the Viceroy planned this visit to London. The exchange of cables between Jawaharlalji and the Prime Minister gave us an impression that there was no question of reopening the 16th May document. But now everything, in my opinion, has been reopened by implication. So many things have been left vague. Even up to this date we do not know what the exact position of Jinnah and H.M.G. is as regards the questions I have raised above.

The Congress, I may assure you, is working with the best of intentions. You may criticise, as Lady Cripps did, the speeches of Sardar Patel. But the people would have very much misunderstood the situation had he kept silent. And I can tell you that they have not had a bad effect on the psychology of the Muslims. They have protested, but they have also realised the position.

But if at every stage when we begin to settle down to work, the Viceroy, advised by the reactionary element in the Services, and H.M.G. advised by the Viceroy, put spokes in the wheel of the progress of the Constituent Assembly, then the only thing that can happen is that people will get desperate and the whole structure will collapse and the trust established after such great labour will be gone. The situation will then become more serious than before.

Lady Cripps asked me what exactly could be done to help. I told her that the following were essential:—

1. The Interim Government must be made to work as a team. The Muslim League should either participate in the Constituent Assembly or should leave the Interim Government. They must be told this frankly and firmly.

2. While I don't object to the principle of self-determination and agree that no constitution should be imposed on any unwilling part of the country, it should be made clear, as you did in the State document of 16th May, that in the last resort if Muslims don't join, they can have their own constitution only in

the places where they are in a majority; which means not the whole of the Punjab nor the whole of Bengal. We have no desire to dominate. But we shall not be coerced into being dominated.

3. The Viceroy and the Service must play the game. Lord Wavell is not a politician and his advisers are pro-League who don't desire to see India free. I have no doubt on that score.

4. It is essential to make a declaration fixing the final dates when under all circumstances power will finally be transferred to Indian hands. As long as this uncertainty continues, no agreement is possible.

I know the difficulty of H.M.G. I have no doubt that you are doing your best. But you must realise our difficulties too. Even with the best of intentions, the actions taken so far have not bridged the gulf but have only widened it.

It would be presumptuous on my part to think that my suggestion for the naming of a definite date for Independence, a time limit in short, was the cause of the Labour Government's decision to do so, and to recall Lord Wavell and send out Lord Mountbatten. It may have had some influence in that direction, I believe.

Three days later I wrote again:—

15th December, 1946.

My dear Sir Stafford,

After I wrote to you on the 12th, your speech appeared in full in India. It is a fair summary of the events. On the whole, the debate in the House of Commons could be called satisfactory. How I sympathise with you when you are abused by Churchill and Jinnah and also criticised by us !

I find you have replied in your speech to one of the points of my last letter. Referring to the last sentence of the statement of December 6, you have said that no constitution will be imposed on those areas in which Muslims are in the majority. I have no quarrel with this. Nobody desires that any constitution made without the co-operation of Muslims should be imposed on East Bengal or West Punjab or other Muslim areas. But do you at all believe that Jinnah will co-operate?

I have grave doubts whether in the end Jinnah will parti-

cipate in the Constituent Assembly. And if he does so, it will be only with the object of fighting for Pakistan. I don't see, therefore, any common ground between us. However, the Congress, I believe, will take a reasonable attitude and would welcome his co-operation.

I personally think that the other members of the League are not so much the difficulty. Left to themselves, they would take a reasonable view. But I don't think Jinnah will ever co-operate. That position must be faced by all realists.

Meanwhile Bapu, to the exclusion of all other issues, strove valiantly but with only fitful successes for the cause of Hindu-Moslem unity, and was still marooned in East Bengal. His friends, including Sardar Patel, were more than doubtful of the wisdom of this prolonged marooning of himself in East Bengal, which was also putting a great strain upon his devoted helpers, who were compelled to live in acute discomfort in what one of them described as rat-holes.

In this period a controversy arose about his relationship with some of his female associates. There was nothing fundamentally wrong, but there was no dearth of uncharitable critics who would impute all sorts of blemishes to him. He desired to issue a public statement, which Sardar thought would not be desirable. He and others thought that instead of telling the public his attitude on these matters, he, though perfectly spotless, should conduct himself as the world desired him to do. He did not like this. His distress revealed itself in a long letter to me:—

Raipur, 14-2-47.

My dear Ghanshyamdas,

I sent you a letter through Sushila. But I have been upset somewhat by Sardar's letter. Devadas's letter is still ringing in my ears. I do not remember what I wrote to you, for I have not kept a copy of it. All I wish to-day to write is that you should give up your attitude of neutrality. Sardar is quite clear in his mind that what I look upon as my *dharma* is really *adharma*. Devadas has

written as much. I have great faith in Sardar's judgment. I have faith in Devadas's judgment too, but then, though grown up, he is still in my eyes a child. This cannot be said of Sardar. K. and N. too are grown-ups ; but it is not difficult for me to understand their opposition. The link between you and me is your faith that my life is pure, spotless and wholly dedicated to the performance of *dharma*. If that is not so, very little else remains. I would, therefore, like you to take full part in this discussion, though not necessarily publicly—for I certainly do not want your business to suffer. But if I am conducting myself sinfully, it becomes the duty of all friends to oppose me vehemently. A *satyagrahi* [striver after truth] may end by becoming a *duragrahi* [votary of evil] if he comes to regard untruth as truth—that being the only distinction between the two. I believe that is not the case with me ; but that means little, for after all I am not God. I can commit mistakes, I have committed mistakes ; [for aught one knows] this may prove to be my biggest at the fag-end of my life. If that be so, all my well-wishers can open my eyes if they oppose me. If they do not [it means] I shall go from hence even as I am [unreformed]. Whatever I am doing here is as a part of my *yajna**. There is nothing I do knowingly which is not a part and parcel of that *yajna*. Even the rest I take is as a part of that *yajna*.

I am dictating this with a mud-pack over my eyes and abdomen. Shortly afterwards I shall be going to the evening prayer meeting. M.'s episode is taking up a lot of my time, but I do not mind it because even her presence here is for the sake of that *yajna*. Her test constitutes a part of that *yajna*. I may not be able to explain it to you—that is a different matter. The point we must make our friends grasp is this : when I take M. in my lap, do I so as a pure-hearted father or as a father who has strayed from the path of virtue ? What I am doing is nothing new to me ; in thought I have done it for the last 50 years ; in action, in varying degrees, over quite a number of years. Even if you sever all connection with me, I would not shed a tear. Just as I want to stick to my *dharma*, you have to stick to yours.

To come to another matter, the Hindu weavers here—known as *tantis*—have been ruined. Their spinning wheels and houses have mostly been burnt. If they do not get a supply of yarn they

* Duty.

have either to be idle or take to earth work as day labourers. The officer in charge here tells me that the Government cannot provide them yarn unless the Central Government helps. I told him I might be able to obtain the needed supply if they were prepared to pay for it. He was pleased. Can you supply the yarn ; if 'yes' then how much, when and at what price ? Will it be necessary to obtain the sanction of the Interim Government ? Please let me know.

With Bapu's blessings.

Needless to add that while appreciating all that he said I strongly opposed his reasons, and eventually he accepted our advice, though not under conviction. His enemies at that time were trying to give it the shape of a scandal and we thought that a public statement, though a correct and forthright step, could not be politic. We behaved like all worldly men and wanted him to do likewise. Happily he fell in with our views and we were all extremely relieved.

* * * *

This was the last important letter that I received from him, because a few months after that he returned to Delhi and stayed with me continuously for more than five months in my house, where he breathed his last.

Instead of reciting the events of the last moments of his life, I may reproduce a portion of the broadcast which I made immediately after his death.

This time Gandhiji did me the honour of staying with me in Delhi for about five months, and along with him a sufficiently large party of men and women became my guests. Frankly speaking, some of his guests I did not like, nor were they liked by Bapu's associates. Yet my house was open to everybody who came to Gandhiji. There was a regular stream of visitors pouring in from morn till late in the night and Gandhiji, unmindful of this strain, gave a bit of himself to everybody who came to him, either for *darshan* or advice.

After the bomb incident in Birla House many of his closest associates requested Gandhiji to keep the crowd at bay. Sardar

Vallabhbhai Patel had specially deputed about 30 military men and about 20 policemen in plain clothes to watch and guard the prayer meeting. The police authorities even wanted to make individual searches of the persons of those who came to Gandhiji's prayer meeting, but he would not agree to this. Somehow I vaguely felt that these security measures would not avail much to save Gandhiji if God ordained otherwise. His only answer to anxious concern about his safety was 'God alone is my protector.'

Of late he took more devoutly to Ram Nam as a master medicine, contrary to all the advice of his well-meaning physicians. After his last fast his digestion got upset. I suggested to him a simple household remedy. It was after a great deal of persuasion that he agreed to use it. Alas, his great physician Ram soon recalled him.

His last fast caused many of his dearest disciples deep anxiety. I also tried to argue with him against the utility or aptness of this fast, but Gandhiji was firm. Not that Gandhiji was obstinate—he was always open to conviction. Gandhiji had his way of stimulating thought and enquiry in those who came to discuss. And what a patient listener of a constructive critic he was! During his fast, urgent business summoned me to Bombay. But Gandhiji's fast stood in my way.

I went to take his permission and asked him if he did not agree with me that his fast should soon end. I was convinced that the country had reacted most favourably to his wish. Gandhiji smiled and said: 'You mind your business. Why do you ask my permission?' I asked him again: 'Bapu, what do you think are the prospects of an early ending of your fast?' Gandhiji continued to smile and was not willing to be caught in my trap. I recalled to him the story of Nachiketa and Yama and said: 'Even Yama was perturbed when Nachiketa fasted at his door. How can I help feeling anxious and remorseful when a Mahatma fasts in my house?' To all my queries his only answer was: 'My life is in the hands of my God.'

On that fateful Friday evening, Gandhiji was shot at about 5-15 p.m. and he succumbed soon after. I was at that time at Pilani. At about 6 in the evening, college boys came running to me and broke the sad news they had heard over the radio. I immediately felt like dashing to Delhi by car. But my friends counselled me to go by plane the following morning. What a

restless night I passed at Pilani ! I know not if and when I slept or whether I was dreaming or my spirit had flown to Gandhiji. As if in a trance all of a sudden I was with Bapu.

I saw his dead body lying exactly at the place where he used to sleep. I saw Pyarelal and Sushila sitting by his side. Seeing me, Gandhiji got up as if from his sleep, and affectionately patting me said : 'I am glad you have also come. Don't worry about me, even though I have fallen a victim to a conspiracy. But I am going to dance with joy as my mission is now over.' Then he pulled out his watch and said : 'Oh, it is nearing 11 now and you have to take me to Jumna Ghat. So I had better lie down again.'

Suddenly I woke up and wondered whether it was a dream or an occult reality.

The next day I found dear old Bapu lying in his eternal sleep as if nothing were the matter with him. His face radiated the same simple charm, love and purity. I could even detect a streak of compassion and forgiveness in that face. Alas, we would now be missing that face aglow with human warmth and kindness.

Indeed, a great light is extinguished, a mighty hero has fallen and a great spirit is hushed in silence.

Thus ended my thirty-two years association with him !

CHAPTER XXXII

AFTER INDEPENDENCE

WHEN Independence came, two things were obviously of the first importance. One was that production should be rapidly increased. Through the capriciousness of the monsoons and consequent crop failures, and a number of other causes, we were in danger of starvation, a repetition of the Bengal famine on a wider scale. For we were importing food on a large scale without either producing exports to pay for it or having markets in which to sell such exports as we could produce. Consequently, in order to make payments, we were using up our sterling balances at a fantastic rate.

The second important factor was our own need for capital. There was no sufficient capital market in the country and plainly capital had to come from abroad. Unwise speeches made by Ministers in the first rush of enthusiasm were scaring off both domestic and foreign capital alike. In many directions they were inclined to follow the pattern set by the British Labour Government. As things have since turned out, they greatly over-estimated the economic successes of that Government and heavily under-estimated the cost. In the hope of mitigating this state of affairs, both by finding means of increasing production and also of explaining India's position, which at that time was much misunderstood, I visited Britain and America. It would perhaps be more correct to say that our position was much misunderstood in Britain; and in America neither understood nor misunderstood, but simply ignored by everybody except a few statesmen. The interest of these statesmen lay chiefly in our position, both geographically and morally, in the struggle against Communism.

In England I was fortunate enough to have a

lengthy conversation with Mr. Churchill, but found him as misinformed about India as before. I wrote a long account of this to Sardar Patel, who had now taken the place of Bapu in my correspondence, and quote from this letter:—

He suddenly blurted out : ‘I did not like your action in Hyderabad. You should have held a plebiscite.’ I pointed out to him that now India was peaceful and that even Englishmen who had been out recently told me that no country in the world was more peaceful than India at present. Pandit Nehru and the Sardar were doing very well. We were stemming the tide of Communism. But we had to improve the lot of the people. We needed two things : a strong defence and quick industrialisation. This must be done immediately. Our leaders were pretty old men. Their word today was law. But if they can’t build up India within the next 10 years, I do not know what will happen after 10 years.

‘I should not look 10 years ahead,’ he remarked. ‘One year is quite enough.’

Then I reminded him of what he told me in 1935, the message of friendliness conveyed through me to Gandhiji. We had freedom now. We were friends and would like to be friends. Why was he talking in an unfriendly manner ? ‘I am no more unfriendly,’ he quickly came out. ‘If you will be kind to England, I will definitely reciprocate. We are likely to come back as a Government. The Socialists are getting unpopular, and therefore I do not want to do anything that may be interpreted in India as unfriendly. I never look back. I have been taught to look ahead. The past is forgotten. Now if you co-operate, I am prepared to co-operate.’ I pointed out to him how Pandit Nehru, with all his past bitterness, had now decided to remain in the Commonwealth. He warmly remarked : ‘I very much appreciate his magnanimity.’ Then suddenly he asked me : ‘Have you got a National Anthem ? Is it a good tune ?’ I said : ‘Not very good.’ ‘Why don’t you play with your own National Anthem *God save the King* ? These small things help a lot. Canada has its own tune and yet side by side they play ours too. This creates a friendly feeling.’ I explained to him the difficulty but added : ‘That will depend on England. If you are friends, perhaps it may

come.' He remarked : 'I think it will come in course of time !' When I told him that our greatest drawback was our poverty which we desired to eliminate within the shortest possible time, that unless we raised the standard of our people, nothing could stem the tide of Communism, and that England should co-operate with us in our task, he remarked : 'Your poverty with your increasing population is a difficult problem.'

I asked him what impression Eden brought from India. He said : 'He was very pleased. He told me about your conversation with him.' Then he asked me whether Nehru would be able to see the Commonwealth formula through. I said : 'I have no doubt. Socialists are not very strong. Communists are underground.' I pointed out to him that Britain must help us more than any other country. He agreed and again affirmed his desire to be friendly, but added Pakistan had enough water resources and food.

Everybody seems to think that the Socialists here are losing ground. I would not be surprised, therefore, if in the next election Labour comes in with a much reduced majority.

I am meeting Mr. Alexander tomorrow.

6th May, 1949.

I met Anthony Eden for half an hour yesterday. He told me that at the Tea he had with you in Delhi, you told him that subject to the *status quo* in our Constitution, you will be prepared to remain in the Commonwealth. This he conveyed to Attlee and also Churchill, and strongly asked the latter to help. He is highly satisfied with the result.

I talked to him about the need of building up a strong India militarily as well as industrially, and to that end the U.K. should co-operate with us. He said he would talk to (Lord) Alexander about military equipment, and about industries to City men. Now that India was in the Commonwealth, he said that they would all co-operate. He was nice and cordial.

On my return to London from America I again reported to the Sardar in July:—

11th July, 1949.

So far I have met here, the Prime Minister, Mr. Alexander, Mr. Bevin, Mr. Noel-Baker, Sir John Anderson and Mr. Churchill.

I am likely to meet some of them again and many more in the next week. Cripps I am meeting in a day or two.

The resignation of Mudie and the impending visit of Liaquat to Moscow are not being taken here very seriously. They do not like it, but they think that it is a bluff just to get concessions out of Great Britain. The effect of all this from the point of view of Pakistan has not been bad. Pakistan is still treated as an under-dog. And while we are thought to be good, reasonable and respectable persons, it is always suggested that we should try to keep them in humour. If they collapse, it would not be to our interest; so we are advised.

About Kashmir, they are all very much worried. While the people here appreciate the position of Jammu and the Buddhist area, they do not understand why we should insist on a substantial Muslim area like Kashmir valley being included in India.

As regards Hyderabad, nobody is troubled over it. It is all forgotten. The chief thing today is Kashmir, and everybody seems to be in favour of some sort of partition.

As regards the economic condition, it is very bad here. But what is most remarkable is the way they are fighting it out, in a very scientific manner with grim determination. They may not be able to maintain their present standard of life. But they would not allow it to go down without a serious struggle.

As regards investment from England, there are better possibilities here than in America. I have had a few talks with businessmen and they were not disappointing. There are certain difficulties which will have to be solved. But here again I think I can do something.

14th July, 1949.

After I wrote you last, I met Lord Halifax and Mr. Crowther, the Editor of the London *Economist*. I was lunching today with Lady Mountbatten along with Lady Cripps and Pamela Mountbatten. In the afternoon, I met Lord Camrose and his Editor, viz., of the *Daily Telegraph*.

Lady Mountbatten was not quite happy about our general administration. She thought that we were centralising too much and that the Ministers were overworked. She was slightly critical in a very friendly manner. She asked me to convey her affec-

tionate regards to the Sardar. So did Mr. Alexander, the Defence Minister, and also Lady Cripps.

At lunch for nearly ten minutes Lady Mountbatten, her daughter and Lady Cripps vied with each other in paying high tributes to Maniben who, had she been present, would have blushed and felt embarrassed.

The *Daily Telegraph*, and occasionally the *Daily Express*, are still both unfriendly to us. Yesterday there was a mischievous despatch from India describing the deteriorating relations between Britishers and Pakistanis, for which the correspondent blames India! I had a long talk with Camrose and his Editor on the matter.

Noel-Baker was anxious about Kashmir. He believes in plebiscites. But I gather that he believes in regional plebiscites and not in a plebiscite as a whole.

Beyond this I need not go.

APPENDIX (*see p. 54*)

Resolution of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry

- ‘(1) That the Federation is strongly of opinion that the present repressive policy of Government will be no solution of the existing unhappy state of the country and urges upon Government that it should be substituted by a policy of reconciliation so that an atmosphere suitable for framing a constitution acceptable to the people and for its smooth working thereafter may be created.
- (2) That the Federation regrets the interpretation put upon the Committee’s resolution dated the 22nd January 1932, in view of the express statement with which it opens that the Committee of the Federation recognise it to be their duty to take part in the framing of a suitable constitution for India.
- (3) The Federation feels that having regard to the repressive policy and having regard to the experience of its delegation in London at the last session of the Round Table Conference, participation by its representative in the work of the Consultative Committee can be productive of no good to national interests unless :—
 - (a) there is a genuine desire on the part of the Government to change that policy and to discuss and come to an agreement with the progressive opinion of India on the questions of financial autonomy, safeguards, reservations and trading rights ;
 - (b) towards this end, the Consultative Committee is at liberty to have a free and full discussion on the various questions connected with finance and the questions connected with trading rights, financial safeguards, etc., are referred to a committee composed of an equal number of British and Indian experts, the latter to be such men as command the confidence of this Federation.’

Paragraph three, as it was framed in an earlier version of the above resolution

- (3) That the Committee heard their delegate to the Round Table Conference and learnt with regret that no adequate oppor-

APPENDIX

tunity was made available for the examination and full discussion of the questions of reservations, financial safeguards and trading rights and resolved that in their opinion the question of financial safeguards and trading rights should be examined by a committee of businessmen with not less than one half of Indian personnel commanding the confidence of the Federation with a view to explore the possibility of an agreed solution of these questions.

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(Contd. from front inside flap)

the late Lord Derby, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, Lord Baldwin and Sir Winston Churchill.

G. D. Birla was a member of the Round Table Conference and spent much of his time in England while the *Government of India Act*, 1935, was before Parliament. By extracting assurances from British statesmen that the reserve powers of the Governor-General and the Governors would be sparingly used, he strove indefatigably to allay the suspicion of politically conscious India that the Act marked no significant advance on the path of Self-Government. It is significant that eventually, in 1937, on Gandhiji's advice, Congress agreed to accept office. Throughout the war years Gandhiji and Birla were in constant touch with each other, and Birla strove hard to prove that Gandhiji was not behind the violence that broke out in 1942.

This, then, is the story of India between the two wars and after, the story of events that culminated in Independence and of the men who moulded these events. Very few people have had the unique facilities enjoyed by G. D. Birla, who moved freely both in the political and commercial worlds. This memoir records the experience of a patriot who has worked tirelessly for the education and uplift of his less fortunate brothers, and who has always striven to keep the welfare of his country to the fore.

